



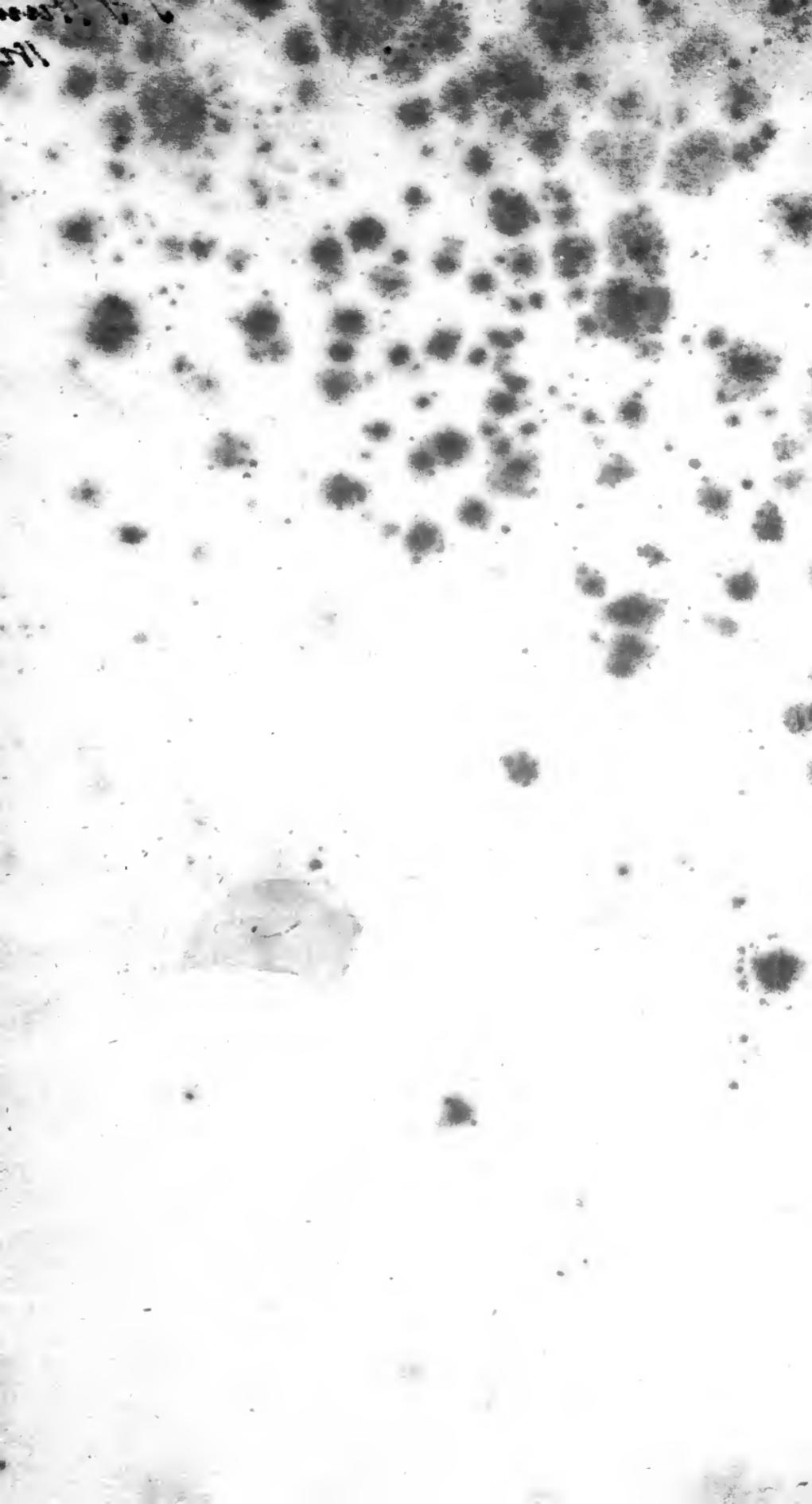


Mary G. Howell

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HADAD,

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY JAMES A. HILLHOUSE,

AUTHOR OF PERCY'S MASQUE, AND THE JUDGMENT.

NEW-YORK :

PRINTED FOR E. BLISS & E. WHITE.

MDCCCXXV.

Find wd.

Southern District of New-York, ss.

(L. S.) BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the seventeenth day of March, in the forty-ninth year of the independence of the United States of America, E. Bliss & E. White, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

"Hadad, a Dramatic Poem. By James A. Hillhouse, Author of Percy's Masque, and The Judgment."

In conformity to the act of Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned." And also to an act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL,
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TO

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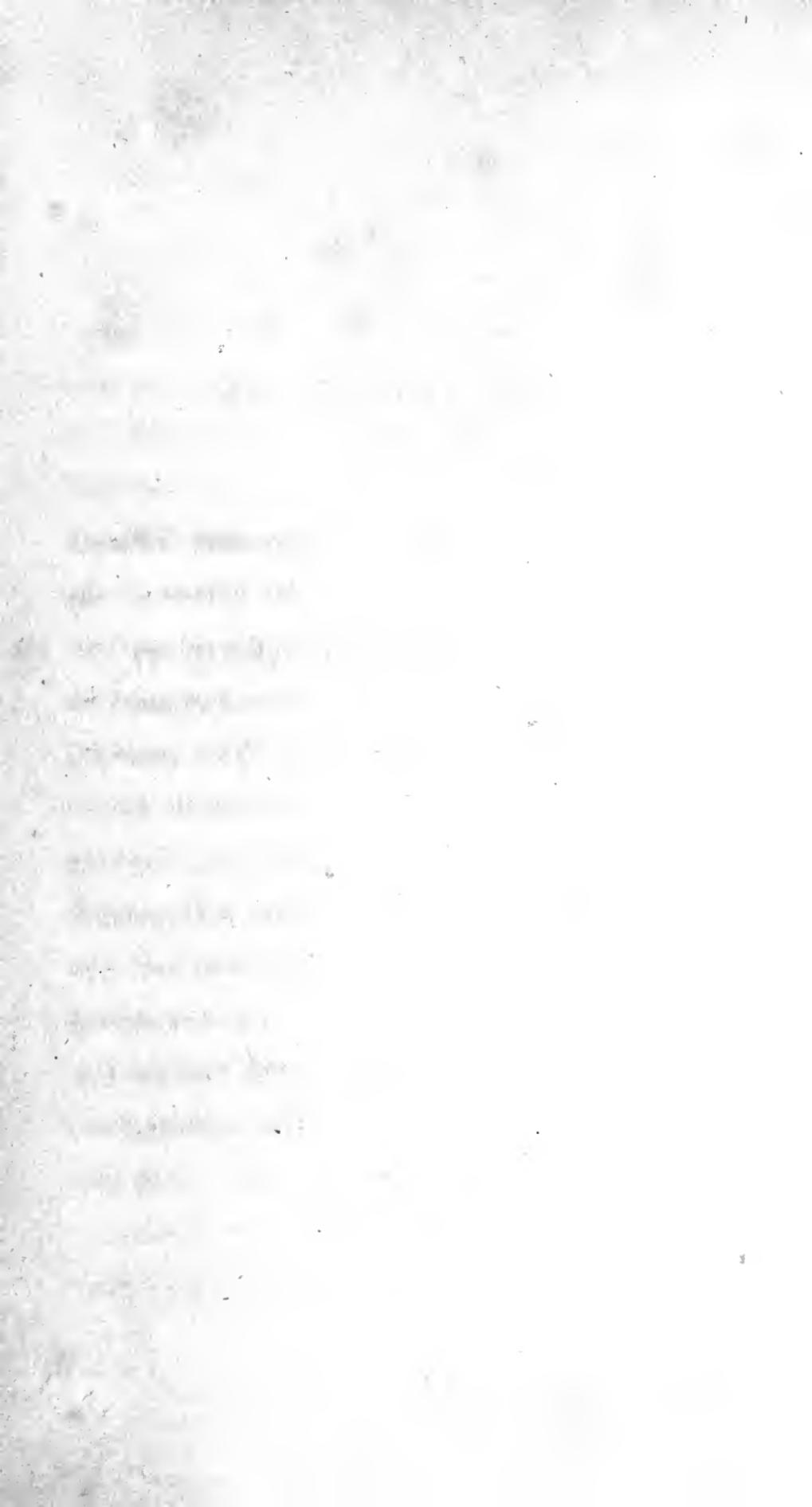
ABRAHAM BEACH, D. D.

AS A TESTIMONY OF AFFECTION,

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

M582042



INTRODUCTION.

THE belief in a former intercourse between mankind, and the good and evil beings of the Spiritual World, harmonizes with the solemn twilight of the scriptural ages, and is sustained by many declarations of Holy Writ. The passages involving that part of the doctrine which relates to the Fallen Spirits—for example, those reciting the necromantic power of the Egyptian Magicians, of the Sorceress of Endor, the passion and discomfiture of the Evil Angel, who was enamoured of the beautiful daughter of Raguel, and the Demonian possessions of a later period—are explained, by some paraphrasts, in a manner which precludes spiritual agency; but by most commentators, supported by the common faith of the Chris-

INTRODUCTION.

tian world, they are understood as simple narrations of actual occurrences. Dr. Clark affirms, that to every unprejudiced reader of the Sacred Writings, it is evident they represent those who dealt with Familiar Spirits, “as actually possessing a power to evoke the dead, to perform supernatural operations, and to discover hidden and secret things, by spells, charms, incantations, &c.”* Dr. Gray, in his observations on the Book of Tobit, which he considers as entitled to the credit of an authentic historical narrative, remarks : “ With respect to the agency of Angels, there is nothing inconsistent with reason, received opinions, or Scripture, in supposing a limited superintendence of Superior Beings. We know, indeed, that under the peculiar circumstances of the Jewish economy, the ministry of Angels was manifestly employed

* Adam Clark, note on the 18th ver. 22d Chap. Exod.

in subserviency to God's designs ; and that particular personages were occasionally favoured with their familiar intercourse. It is likewise unquestionable, that before the power and malevolence of Evil Spirits were checked and restricted by the control of our Saviour, their open influence was experienced."

Thus understood, the Scriptures offer scenes of unrivalled wildness and sublimity ; agents, whose power and attributes are of unknown extent, who connect, on the authority of our Faith, the visible with the invisible world. The reader will bear in mind, that the following pages relate to a people accustomed to preternatural occurrences ; and to a period, when the Diviner and the Mage not only enjoyed the confidence of the wise, and powerful of the earth, and influenced the affairs of empires, but are believed, by the learned of later ages, to have actually possessed, in some instances at least, superhuman art and knowledge.*

* Among others, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Tertullian—appear to

INTRODUCTION.

The particular epoch signalized by the rebellion of Absalom, is familiar to all. The simple manners which prevailed in Israel previously to the kingly government, and even during the life of Saul, had disappeared. Accelerated by the extensive conquests, and the amazing wealth of David, history declares the dawn of that luxury to have become manifest, which advanced in the reign of his successor, to a proverbial height of splendour.

Hadad was the name of the cotemporary sovereigns of Damascus. Nicholas of Damascus relates, that after many battles, David signally defeated King Hadad near the Euphrates, together with Hadadezer, another Syrian monarch whom he attempted to succour ; and adds, that the succeeding Kings of Damascus took the name of **Hadad**.

have been of this opinion. See their notions respecting the Magi, cited by Calmet. Art. Magus.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DAVID, *King of Israel.*

ABSALOM, } his sons ; the latter yet a boy.
SOLOMON, }

HADAD, *of the blood royal of Damascus, an hostage in Jerusalem.*

MEPHIBOSHETH, *the son of Jonathan ; residing in David's palace.*

NATHAN, *the Seer.*

ZADOK, } *High Priests.*
ABIATHAR, }

JOAB, *the Military Chief.*

BENAIAH, *Captain of the Cherethites and Pelethites, or Life Guard.*

ITTAI, *Commander of David's band of Gittites.*

AHITHOPHEL, }
HUSHAI, } of the Royal Council.
MANASSES, }
MALCHIAH,

BALAAM-HADDON, *a Babylonish Mage.*

OBIL, *an Ishmaelite, keeper of the King's camels.*

MAUGRABIN, *an instrument of Hadad's.*

ABIMILECH, *Captain of a Company of Ishmaelites.*

BAGOAS, *an Eunuch in the household of Absalom.*

Jews, Ishmaelites, Slaves, &c.

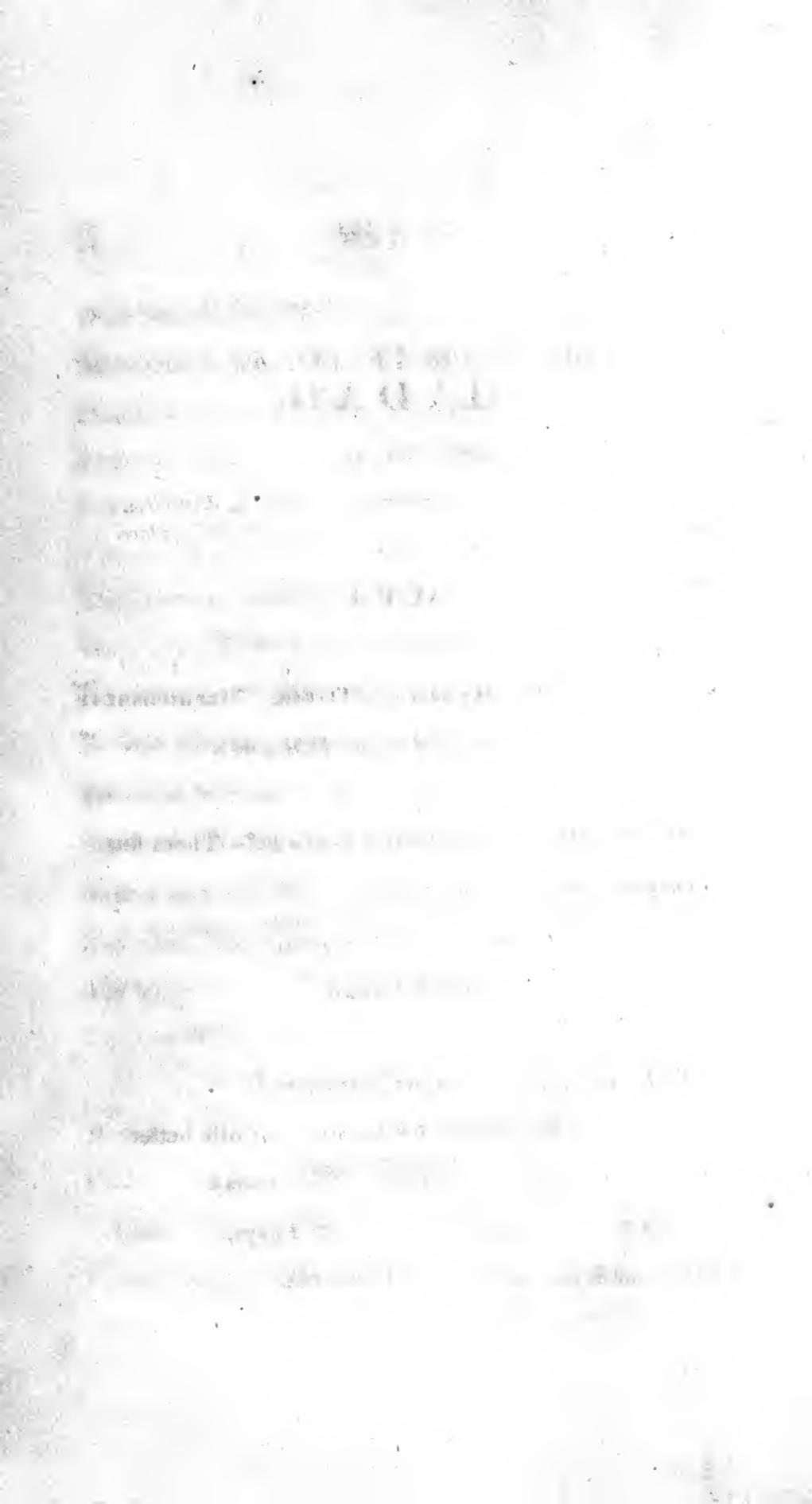
TAMAR, *the daughter of Absalom.*

MALCUTH, *wife of Obil.*

SARAH, } wife and daughter of Abimilech.
ADAH, }

Ishmaelite women, &c.

SCENE—chiefly in Jerusalem.



HADAD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A hall in the palace of DAVID. MEPHIBOSHETH seated, attended by two Ethiopians.*

Mephib. Who lurks in yonder vestibule?—There flits
A shadow there.

Enter HADAD.

Had. Ha, Prince, forsake the banquet?

Mephib. Young Syrian, he becomes that title better
Who, midst his sons and captains, feasts, to-day,
Envoy from proudest nations; tyrant Egypt,
Elam, and Tyre, Assyria, and Damascus,

Dusk princes from the east, and unknown south ;
All bearing to his coffers richest gifts,
Fuming his pride with incense, courting league
And amity with him, whose warlike name
Even Ishmael's roving sons respect and fear.

Had. Dost thou—thou, whose illustrious grandsire wore
The crown of Israel, when young David's brows
Were wreathed with oak-leaves in the wilderness,
Renounce thy lineage, title, thy great name,
Because thou lack'st the chair and canopy ?—
Prince, in that unseen chamber where the Soul
Sits shrouded with her winged ministry,
Swifter than light and countless as the stars,
High aims, proud thoughts, inflexible resolves,
And hopes that reach at glory, there is fixed
The seat of Majesty.

Mephib. O, thoughts like these
May grace the lips, but thou wilt live to find
Power is the seat of Majesty.

Had. When clouds
Lower'd black as midnight o'er his head, who, now,

Thinks nought can intercept the sun, and deems
His throne immoveable as holy Zion,
What had his heart to lean on in the hour
Of peril, but an old man's prophecy?—
Less stable, Prince, than lineal rights like thine.—
But to that golden prophecy he clung,
Revolved it waking, slept to dream it o'er,
Drew from it hope, and constancy, and courage;
Else, had some cavern been his dwelling still,
And not these roofs of cedar.

Mephib. Hadad—no—

Thou'rt not so wild, to deem the abject wretch.

Mephibosheth e'er thinks of lineal rights?

Had. Glimmers thy natal star more dim than mine?
Am not I here an hostage, poor, and powerless,
Condemned to exile on the false pretence
Of Syria's broken faith? destined, perhaps,
To fill some Hebrew dungeon, while a son
Of David sways the sceptre of Damascus?
Yet, singly here upon his wall-girt hill,
I feel, and will assert my claims, as proudly
As in the halls of Hadad.

Mephib. Different far

Thy fate and mine. Thy race yet lives, and reigns ;
A numerous people and a powerful throne
Await thee. Seated there, thou mayst restore
Its ancient glory : thy victorious arms
May recompense these days to Israel,
Bow haughty Zion to the yoke, and lead
Her princes captive to the banks of Pharpar.
But I, alas ! a cripple since the day
My fathers fell in Mount Gilboa, what
Can I, but weep and curse ? Cut off from glory,
Like some dull Levite, I consume the time
O'er chronicles that teach me what I've lost,
Or, in a niche of these—my master's halls—
Study the mysteries of Israel's court.

Had. A pastime, Prince, various enough to please !

Lust—luxury—ambition—blood !

Mephib. In the primeval day, the friends of God
Dwelt in plain tents, or underneath some tree ;
But see how this Prince-prophet builds his nest.
Mark yonder pavement, like a limpid lake,

Reflecting all things from its polished face ;
Behold yon couches, wrought like kingly thrones
With gold and ivory ; those purple hangings,
Garnished with pearls, and enter-tissued all
With rarest needle-work—a guilty pride
That mocks the tabernacle. Breathe the perfume
From yonder bossy censers, sending up
A silvery volume to the vaulted roof ;—
There the lign-aloes wastes its precious sweets,
Costlier than Ophir's dust. Look at his meats,
His wines, the service of his table ; youths
About his cup fairer than Tammuz. See
His wives, his concubines, whose annual waste
Employs the looms of Egypt, whose white necks
Glitter with gems that might redeem a kingdom.

Had. Types, types of Heaven, my lord Mephibosheth,
Whose pleasures strain, so oft, his soaring fancy.

Mephib. Nor is this all ; his sons outstrip their sire
In every wild device of luxury.
Poor Israel sweats to pamper their blown pride,
Which, swollen and rank, breaks out, anon, in lust

And murder. Never was a suffering land
So cursed with princes, such a locust tribe
To suck its sweetness. Look at Absalom !
Does Pharaoh's chariot prouder shake the way ?
Is there a Syrian temple, where your Gods
Stand in their superhuman majesty,
Awing the worshipper, that can display
A juster image of monarchal pride ?
His haughty spirit lightens in his eye,
That, eagle-like, seems fixed on some far quarry :
His Babylonish mantle, wrought with stars,
And golden characters of strange device,
Flames like a constellation ; and the hoop,
Half seen upon his brows, denotes a will,
That, if it dared, would make a white head crownless.

Had. Interpret not so harshly. It denotes
But David's heir, the eldest, noblest-born,
Bravest, and most illustrious son of Israel.

Mephib. Ha ! by whose blood became he so ?

Had. By blood, which had I shed in such a cause,
An injured, violated sister's cause,
I ne'er had washed the voucher from my hand.

Mephib. But Daniel too—

Is he despatched ? or has he sold his birthright ?

Had. Thou wouldest not name meek-spirited Daniel,
To rule this fiery people ? Send him first
To silence Bashan, when his thousand oaks
Fight with the tempest of the wilderness.

Mephib. But, prithee, how know'st thou, or Absalom,
That Adonijah, who, in royal parts,
Valour, and comeliness, and martial skill,
Scarce yields to him the palm, and far outshines,
In peaceful virtues, and unblemished fame,
May not be chosen ?—ay, or Solomon,
Old Nathan's darling, son of David's age,
Cherished like Joseph, whose ripe boyhood yields
The promise of a mind that after times
Will wonder at ? The King was Jesse's youngest,
And matched young Solomon in looks and years,
When Samuel passed seven stately sons, to crown
The shepherd boy.—Why dost thou fix thine eyes
With such a settled, searching, scorching glare,
As thou wouldest rend the secrets from my soul ?

Had. But hast thou heard—or noted aught like this?

Mephib. Prince of Damascus, what is that to thee?

If Saul and David, or if David's sons

Dispute the throne, hath Syria aught to say?

Had. Nay, Prince, I meant—

Mephib. Meant but to draw forth that

Which Absalom, thy kinsman, burns to know;

Thy more than kinsman—beauteous Tamar's sire!

Tell him, Mephibosheth nor hears, nor sees,

Nor hath, in these fair seeming days, a tongue.

Slaves, bear me hence—the revellers come forth!

[*Mephib. is borne out.*]

Had. I'll drop a balsam, though, shall make thy tongue
Discourse like music, and anoint thine eyes

Till diadems and sceptres dazzle them.

He harps the fatal note—young Solomon—

The scorpion of the brood, whose sting shall prove

Mortal to other than his foes.—[*Listens.*]—The step

Is Absalom's—'tis he—and opportunely.

Enter ABSALOM.

Ab. Hadad, thine uncle's envoys sup with me,
In private, with the Tyrian : Go, I prithee,
And bid those chiefs of Issachar, whose cause
Sped ill this morning. Say Ahithophel,
Who friended them in council, meets with us.—
But why art thou alone here ? all the guests
Have followed to the garden.

Had. The son of Jonathan went hence, but now.
Being next him at the table, I refreshed
His cup so oft, and spiced it so with vaunts
Of Judah's glory, subtler than hot wine
To work on Benjamin, that in a rage
He flung from me to cool his ferment here.
I followed, as unconscious of offence,
In hopes his wine or passion might let fall
Something of import to you.

Ab. Dropp'd he aught ?

Had. An ominous hint or two ; but he was waspish.

Ab. Touching the crown ?

Had. Discoursing of the times,
The King, his power, dominion, wealth, and glory,

I mentioned you as his undoubted heir.
He eyed me with a look askance, implying
More than his words, and craved to know why you,
Or I, thought that—commended Adonijah—
Then, with a smile of dark malignant joy
Which lighted up his murky eye, exclaimed,
“ Why not the younger ?—nature’s prodigy—
Son of old age—the Prophet’s favourite !
What ! did not Samuel consecrate a child ?”

Ab. Malicious slave ! He sees what, like a barbed
And venomous shaft, hath rankled in me long.
The Seer and Joab plot against me.

Had. That
Perplexes me.

Ab. Why, Nathan loves the boy,
And schools him deep in dreams and prophecies ;
But Joab seeks his own imperious will,
Well pleased to see the prince become a priest.
Me he would foil, because I fear him not,
Because I’ve checked his towering arrogance.

Had. But think you that the King gives ear to them ?

Ab. I would not wrong my father.—He hath been
Gracious to me and constant, and hath shown
Tokens of love I cannot lightly bury.
Mis chance estranged us once—but that's long past—
And I remember, when he first embraced me,
How passion heaved his breast, and how the tears
Bedewed his cheeks.

Had. But did you note, my lord,
The homage shown the boy before the envoys ?
How they discoursed with him ? what costly gifts,
Caresses, flattery, they heaped upon him ?
Or watch the workings of your father's face,
When the old Chaldee lifted up his hands
In wonder at his answers ?—Had he been
Israel's sole hope, they could not more have graced him.

Ab. Was it so marked ?

Had. Nay ask ; for others saw it,
And smiled, and spoke aside. And sure, my lord,
The son of Bathsheba receives, of late,
Nicer attention and observance, more
Obsequious homage, and a winged obedience

That flies ere bidding, (most observable
 In those about the court who love not us,)
 And the old Prophet watches him as close
 As if some evil Spirit lurked to snare
 The precious child of heaven, and heir of Israel.

Ab. Would heaven, or hell, or any place but this,
 Contained the basilisk !

Had. Ha ! look !—

Enter NATHAN.

—the hoary son of mischief comes.
 Let us retire to safer conference :—
 Spies are about us :—stay not to accost him.

[*Exeunt Ab. and Had.*]

Nath. Why doth that Syrian shun me ? Always thus
 He, like a guilty thing, avoids my presence.
 Where'er I find him, and I find him ever
 Closely conferring, whether roofed, as now,
 Or on the walls, or in the streets, or gates,
 Or the resorts of men, if I appear,

His bright mysterious eye seems conscious of me,
And soon he vanishes. I touched him once.

He turned, as he had felt a scorpion ; fear
And loathing glared from his enkindled eyes,
And paleness overspread his face, like one
Who smothers mortal pain. Fierce, subtle, dark,
Designing, and inscrutable, he walks
Among us like an evil Angel.

[*Passes on.*] .

SCENE II.

The King's private apartment. King DAVID alone.

Enter NATHAN.

Nath. God save the Anointed !

K. Dav. Seer, we would thy counsel.

Damascus asks a consort for his heir,
Our hostage, here, and names the flower of Israel,
Absalom's daughter. What shall we reply ?

Nath. Should Israel graft upon a heathen stock ?

K. Dav. But 'tis a noble youth, and near of kin ;
 And sure the gentle maiden favours him,
 For Absalom himself preferred the suit,
 Who lives in Tamar.

Nath. Hearken not, O King.

K. Dav. But if the youth conform to Moses, sure,
 His blood and fortunes may aspire so high.
 What nobler line than Hadad's, or what throne
 Of older splendour than Damascus' ?

Nath. Old, and idolatrous.

K. Dav. Her idols fall
 If she be linked with us, and Israel's crown
 Secures a warlike power as her ally.

Nath. Rather betroth her to the poorest hind
 That toils in Judah.

K. Dav. Prophet of the Lord,
 Seest thou aught more in him than we discern—
 A young prince modelled in the rarest mould
 Of mind and features, clad with every grace
 That honours dignity ?—I ne'er beheld,
 Save my son Absalom's, a goodlier form,
 Or mind of brighter lustre.

Nath. I have felt
Strange agitations in his presence, throes,
And horrid workings, like the inward strife
After dark visions, when the spectral forms
That lodge and haunt there, turmoil all my soul.
Some mystery—some strange antipathy
Torments me with abhorrence and distrust.
O, pause, my lord, ere such a covenant;
Heaven frowns on them ; our Law allows them not.
Let not his beauty nor his tongue entice thee :
He hath an eye bright as the morning star,
But pride, and fiendlike cunning, glance from it,
And sin is couched in his lascivious smile.

K. Dav. If intimations visit thee from Heaven,
We owe obedience, else, as man to man,
We speak.—His daughter's welfare I would leave
To Absalom. He hath a mind mature,
Is politic to judge, and loves the maid
Even to her rich deservings. They best know
Their Syrian kinsman, long beneath their roof.

Nath. Hath she escaped, unsoiled, so young and fair,

Syria's and Geshur's impious rites, to yield,
Yield, in the precincts of the sanctuary,
To an uncircumcised, the heart where faith
Glowed like the burning censer!—O, beware
Of crafty policy! It wears a face
Too like ambition. Geshur cleaves to him—
League but Damascus—with his power in Israel—
And Absalom may bend his father's bow.

K. Dav. Wrong not my son.

Nath. I would not; but I fear
The sin of Lucifer hath snared his heart,
Too prone to high aspiring. Let me ask
Wherfore such state attends him? why he rides
In a proud chariot drawn by fiery steeds,
While Israel's monarch sits upon a mule?
Why dazzling guards surround him, chosen youths,
Selected from the prime of all the land,
Armed and arrayed like princes? Why he still
Stands in the gates saluting all who pass,
Or greeting in the streets the common people,
As they were brothers? True humility—

K. Dav. You misinterpret venial things. His name
Was outcast, lost from us three years in Geshur,
Besides a long dejected sojourn here.
He seeks to drive those days from men's remembrance
By shows of splendour, and by courtesy
To win lost hearts.

Nath. He doth insult the throne,
And takes from royalty and age its rev'rence.

K. Dav. You love him not, and ever strained his faults.
Nath. My lord, I know and boldly speak his faults.
If love and loyalty possess his heart,
Wherefore those wassails and night banquetings,
Where malcontents carouse, and wish him King ?
Why are the Chiefs and Princes of the Tribes,
Who come to solemnize our holy feasts,
Caressed about his table till they lose
All sense of precedence, and deem the crown
Already on his brows ? Your chiefest men,
Ancients, and reverend Judges, flock to hear
His Syrian Parasite sweeten their cups
With honied flattery, and golden hopes,

And promises of days when Absalom
 Shall make the desert blossom, and the rock
 Drop as the vine and olive.

K. Dav. Days like these
 Were welcome, Seer.

Nath. You know not what you utter—
 Wo to the hour of his anointing!—King!
 A dreadful vintage shall be trod that day,
 With purple garments!—Lo! the noise of arms,
 Chariots, and horsemen, and the shout of Nations,
 Are in my ears!—the wail of Zion!—Hark!
 A cry, a cry, comes from her royal towers,
 Of bitter anguish, like a Monarch's voice!
 My Son! my People! Wo, alas!

K. Dav. Pause not;—
 Declare it all; Heaven's will is ours.

Nath. 'Tis gone—
 It passed me, like a cloud of blood, with sounds
 Like the near clang of battle.

K. Dav. (*After a pause.*) Man of God,
 We hearken to thee as an Oracle

Of sacred wisdom ; nothing from thy lips
Falls unrespected. He who changed yon crook
For Israel's sceptre, may refuse, or grant
The same to Absalom : His will be done.
But, Prophet, know I harbour no distrust
Of him thou blam'st. Familiar with the pomp
Of older kingdoms, he foreruns the day
Of simpler Israel. Nay, he ever loved
The ornaments of life, and claimed his due
Of rank and state ; delighted in the blaze
Of arms, and glistering face of war ; and bore
Himself, from his most tender years, like one
Conscious of nobleness, born to sustain
A kingdom's burthen.

Nath. Son of Jesse—

K. Dav. Hath he not,
Since fourteen summers gave his sinews strength,
Served with me in the field, slept in my tent,
Hungered, and suffered, watched, and toiled with me,
Shed his young blood by veteran captains' sides,
And wielded those bright weapons you dispraise

Beneath mine eyes, in dire and mutual hazards,
Like a true son and soldier? Hadst thou stood
Beside me, Seer, at Helam, when the field
Shook with Barbarian triumph, to behold
The fierce Assyrian squadrons darkening round me,
Thou hadst not blamed his rushing wheels and steeds
That cleft their sabaoth, like Heaven's red bolt,
With unhop'd rescue.—Twice has he redeem'd me.—
Shall time wear such things from a father's heart?

Nath. Alas—

K. Dav. (*Waving his hand.*) 'Tis near the hour of
sacrifice.

We'll pause ere we decide the Syrian's suit.

Nath. (*Making obeisance.*)

Dwell ever in the hollow of His hand!

[*Exit Nath.* *K. Dav.* retires into his closet.]

SCENE III.

The garden of ABSALOM's house on Mount Zion, near the palace, overlooking the city. TAMAR sitting by a fountain.

Tam. How aromatic evening grows ! The flowers,
And spicy shrubs exhale like onycha ;
Spikenard and henna emulate in sweets.
Blest hour ! which He, who fashioned it so fair,
So softly glowing, so contemplative,
Hath set, and sanctified to look on man.
And lo ! the smoke of evening sacrifice
Ascends from out the tabernacle. Heaven
Accept the expiation, and forgive
This day's offences !—Ha ! the wonted strain,
Precursor of his coming !—Whence can this—
It seems to flow from some unearthly hand—

Enter HADAD.

Had. Does beauteous Tamar view, in this clear fount,
Herself, or heaven ?

Tam. Nay, Hadad, tell me whence
Those sad, mysterious sounds.

Had. What sounds, dear Princess ?

Tam. Surely, thou know'st ; and now I almost think
Some spiritual creature waits on thee.

Had. I heard no sounds, but such as evening sends
Up from the city to these quiet shades ;
A blended murmur sweetly harmonizing
With flowing fountains, feathered minstrelsy,
And voices from the hills.

Tam. The sounds I mean,
Floated like mournful music round my head,
From unseen fingers.

Had. When ?

Tam. Now, as thou camest.

Had. 'Tis but thy fancy, wrought
To ecstasy ; or else thy grandsire's harp
Resounding from his tower at eventide.
I've lingered to enjoy its solemn tones,

Till the broad moon, that rose o'er Olivet,
Stood listening in the zenith ; yea, have deemed
Viols and heavenly voices answered him.

Tam. But these—

Had. Were we in Syria, I might say
The Naiad of the fount, or some sweet Nymph,
The goddess of these shades, rejoiced in thee,
And gave thee salutations ; but I fear
Judah would call me infidel to Moses.

Tam. How like my fancy ! When these strains precede
Thy steps, as oft they do, I love to think
Some gentle being who delights in us
Is hovering near, and warns me of thy coming ;
But they are dirge-like.

Had. Youthful fantasy,
Attuned to sadness, makes them seem so, lady.
So evening's charming voices, welcomed ever,
As signs of rest and peace ;—the watchman's call,
The closing gates, the Levite's mellow trump
Announcing the returning moon, the pipe
Of swains, the bleat, the bark, the housing-bell,
Send melancholy to a drooping soul.

Tam. But how delicious are the pensive dreams
That steal upon the fancy at their call !

Had. Delicious to behold the world at rest.
Meek labour wipes his brow, and intermits
The curse, to clasp the younglings of his cot ;
Herdsmen, and shepherds, fold their flocks—and hark !
What merry strains they send from Olivet !
The jar of life is still ; the city speaks
In gentle murmurs ; voices chime with lutes
Waked in the streets and gardens ; loving pairs
Eye the red west in one another's arms ;
And nature, breathing dew and fragrance, yields
A glimpse of happiness, which He, who formed
Earth and the stars, had power to make eternal.

Tam. Ah ! Hadad, meanest thou to reproach the Friend
Who gave so much, because he gave not all ?

Had. Perfect benevolence, methinks, had willed
Unceasing happiness, and peace, and joy ;
Filled the whole universe of human hearts
With pleasure, like a flowing spring of life.

Tam. Our Prophet teaches so, till man rebelled.

Had. Mighty rebellion ! Had he 'leagured Heaven
With beings powerful, numberless, and dreadful,
Strong as the enginery that rocks the world
When all its pillars tremble ; mixed the fires
Of onset with annihilating bolts
Defensive vollied from the throne ; this, this
Had been rebellion worthy of the name,
Worthy of punishment. But what did man ?
Tasted an apple ! and the fragile scene,
Eden, and innocence, and human bliss,
The nectar-flowing streams, life-giving fruits,
Celestial shades, and amaranthine flowers,
Vanish ; and sorrow, toil, and pain, and death,
Cleave to him by an everlasting curse.

Tam. Ah ! talk not thus.

Had. Is this benevolence ?—

Nay, loveliest, these things sometimes trouble me :
For I was tutored in a brighter faith.
Our Syrians deem each lucid fount, and stream,
Forest, and mountain, glade, and bosky dell,
Peopled with kind divinities, the friends

Of man, a spiritual race allied
 To him by many sympathies, who seek
 His happiness, inspire him with gay thoughts,
 Cool with their waves, and fan him with their airs.
 O'er them, the Spirit of the Universe,
 Or Soul of Nature, circumfuses all
 With mild, benevolent, and sun-like radiance ;
 Pervading, warming, vivifying earth,
 As spirit does the body, till green herbs,
 And beauteous flowers, and branchy cedars rise ;
 And shooting stellar influence through her caves,
 Whence minerals and gems imbibe their lustre.

Tam. Dreams, Hadad, empty dreams.

Had. These Deities

They invocate with cheerful gentle rites,
 Hang garlands on their altars, heap their shrines
 With Nature's bounties, fruits, and fragrant flowers.
 Not like yon gory mount that ever reeks—

Tam. Cast not reproach upon the holy altar.

Had. Nay, sweet.—Having enjoyed all pleasures here
 That Nature prompts, but chiefly blissful love,

At death, the happy Syrian maiden deems
Her immaterial flies into the fields,
Or circumambient clouds, or crystal brooks,
And dwells, a Deity, with those she worshipped ;
Till time, or fate, return her in its course
To quaff, once more, the cup of human joy.

Tam. But thou believ'st not this.

Had. I almost wish

Thou didst ; for I have feared, my gentle Tamar,
Thy spirit is too tender for a Law
Announced in terrors, coupled with the threats
Of an inflexible and dreadful Being,
Whose word annihilates, whose awful voice
Thunders the doom of nations, who can check
The sun in heaven, and shake the loosened stars,
Like wind-tossed fruit, to earth, whose fiery step
The earthquake follows, whose tempestuous breath
Divides the sea, whose anger never dies,
Never remits, but everlasting burns,
Burns unextinguished in the deeps of Hell.
Jealous, implacable—

Tam. Peace ! impious ! peace !

Had. Ha ! says not Moses so ?

The Lord is jealous.

Tam. Jealous of our faith,

Our love, our true obedience, justly his ;

And a poor recompense for all his favours.

Implacable he is not ; contrite man,

Ne'er found him so.

Had. But others have,

If oracles be true.

Tam. Little we know

Of them ; and nothing of their dire offence.

Had. I meant not to displease, love ; but my soul
Sometimes revolts, because I think thy nature
Shudders at him and yonder bloody rites.

How dreadful ! when the world awakes to light,
And life, and gladness, and the jocund tide
Bounds in the veins of every happy creature,
Morning is ushered by a murdered victim,
Whose wasting members reek upon the air,
Polluting the pure firmament ; the shades

Of evening scent of death ; almost, the shrine
O'ershadowed by the holy Cherubim ;
And where the clotted current from the altar
Mixes with Kedron, all its waves are gore.
Nay, nay, I grieve thee—'tis not for myself,
But that I fear these gloomy things oppress
Thy soul, and cloud its native sunshine.

Tam. (in tears, clasping her hands.)

Witness, ye Heavens ! Eternal Father, witness !
Blest God of Jacob ! Maker ! Friend ! Preserver !
That with my heart, my undivided soul,
I love, adore, and praise thy glorious name,
Confess thee Lord of all, believe thy Laws
Wise, just, and merciful, as they are true.
O Hadad, Hadad ! you misconstrue much
The sadness that usurps me—'tis for thee
I grieve—for hopes that fade—for your lost soul,
And my lost happiness.

Had, O say not so,
Beloved Princess. Why distrust my faith ?

Tam. Thou know'st, alas, my weakness ; but remember,
I never, never will be thine, although
The feast, the blessing, and the song were past,
Though Absalom and David called me bride,
Till sure thou own'st, with truth, and love sincere,
The Lord Jehovah.

Had. Leave me not—Hear, hear—
I do believe—I know that Being lives
Whom you adore. Ah ! stay—by proofs I know
Which Moses had not.

Tam. Prince, unclasp my hand. (*Exit.*)

Had. Untwine thy fetters if thou canst.—How sweet
To watch the struggling softness ! It allays
The beating tempest of my thoughts, and flows
Like the nepenthe of elysium through me.
How exquisite ! Like subtlest essences,
She fills the spirit ! How the girdle clips
Her taper waist with its resplendent clasp !
Her bosom's silvery-swelling network yields
Ravishing glimpses, like sweet shade and moonshine
Checkering Astarte's statue—

Enter a SLAVE.

Slave. One in haste
Inquires for you, my lord.

Had. I come.

[*Exeunt.*]

A C T * II.

SCENE I. *An apartment in ABSALOM's house.* ABSALOM
and HADAD in a discourse.

Ab. But you still speak as if a heavy doubt
Burthened your tongue. Be plain. Think you his love
Exceeds a parent's charter ?

Had. Troth, my lord,
I scarce know how to answer. All my hopes
Are so ingraft to yours, that I may see
With jealous eyes. What casts a shade o'er you,
Leaves me in darkness palpable ; for I,
With lineal honours, may a jewel lose
Far dearer than Damascus' diadem.

Ab. Think you—I say—the aim of his fond dotage
Transcends the sacred limits of my rights ?

Had. Why, then, my lord, I must confess, this flux
Of zeal, and duty, and officious homage,
Observable of late, enforces me
To think some ears about the Prince have caught
What else I had believed an envious fable.

Ab. What fable?

Had. Such I held it, and, as such,
My duty bade me keep it. Curse the tongue
Whence sland'rous rumour, like the adder-drop,
Distils her venom, withering friendship's faith,
Turning love's favour—

Ab. Speak, speak.

Had. My lord, a whisper steals about the city,
Not widely known, or current for a truth,
But credited by some,—that, wrought upon
By Joab and the Seer, the King has named
The royal heir.

Ab. Ha! named—and I not know it?

Had. Twice in the gates, and thrice upon the walls,
Was I saluted yesterday, and asked
If my lord Absalom had heard the rumour.

'Tis said, to make the choice irrevocable,
 Young Solomon has received, by Nathan's hand,
 The private unction.

Ab. Vengeance!—What! anoint him!
 Th' opprobrious blot—make him a spectacle!
 Trumpet to all mankind the damned deed
 That scandals his gray hairs, and robs his life
 Of half its lustre!

Had. Oh, my lord, that's past;
 And Time, sin's varnisher, hath done his office.

Ab. Good heaven! his very angel hides his face,
 Even at the name of Bathsheba—

Had. But mark:—
 'Tis but a rumour, we may hope unfounded:
 Though ephod-wearers stroke their beards and smile.

Ab. Founded or false, it wears a treasonous face,
 And looks defiance. Mitred heads, beware!
 And younger brothers!—Death! ere Absalom
 Tamely behold the lineal ornament
 Plucked from his crest, Jerusalem shall shake
 Her rock-built throne in ruins o'er our House,
 And Aaron's line perish beneath the Sanctuary!

Had. (*aside.*) Tremble, towered mistress, that behold'st afar,

From thy embattled mount, the subject nations !

Ab. If I have forfeited my birthright, name
The action which attaints my blood. Have I
Preferred my safety to the public weal ?
Spared toil, or blood, at Israel's summons ? shrunk
From any hazard to advance her power,
That this same sin-engendered seed should think
To step before me?—Show me on what grounds,
What plea, what pretext, yonder harlot's stripling
Confronts, for precedence, the son of Kings
Who girt his harness in the field ere he
Was born.

Had. Let Joab answer.

Ab. Were there in 't
A face of justice—but to see my rights
Wantonly trampled by an impious bandit ;
A father's love, which lay upon my heart
Like gracious manna, vanish at the breath
Of an old visionary ; be left blank,

Because I scorn to flatter, and protest
My filial faith for favour, strips me bare
Of patience ; and I swear, ere brook such wrong,
I'll give their chronicles a bloodier leaf
Than Amnon's.

Had. Pause not. Snatch the glorious prize
From brows that totter with the mighty burthen.

Ab. How ! Wouldst thou blight my fame with parricide ?—
I threat usurpers.

Had. Prince, it is not strange
My thoughts outstrip you. Hadad's every hope,
Life, royalty, and liberty, and love,
Depend on Absalom. Who knows how soon
Those precious counsellors, who hide the beams
Of royal grace from you, may stigmatize
Damascus as a dangerous neighbour ; hint
That I am turbulent, and apt for war,
And may, hereafter, shake the peace of Judah ;
Suggest a dungeon as a safer hold ;
While Pharpar's lovely vale may bloom as fair
Beneath his Adonijah's sceptre ? Else,

Why am I held assurance for the faith
Which Syria never broke?—never, my lord—
Those levies which gave umbrage were to check
The insolence of Bosra. Not an hour
Stand I assured of life or liberty,
Till Israel's crown empale my kinsman's head.
Assents he to the alliance, which would rest
The pledge of amity? If his intents
Be fair, why hesitate? Can policy
Devise a surer bond to knit the kingdoms?

Ab. No matter—King or no King's leave—she's thine.

Had. I'm grappled to your fortunes. But, my lord,
Is not the bond 'twixt child and parent charged
With mutual duties? If my father stint
His love, neglect my nurture, cast me off,
Or give my lawful portion to another,
Am I his debtor still, to reverence, love,
Obey? or is the obligation cancel'd?

Ab. Enough—I'll know the truth of this black tale,
If there's a clue to trace it.

Had. Might we not
Extract it from the boy?

Ab. Thou hast a tongue
That strikes like music ; thou mightst charm his heart
To drop its secret.

Had. But how to meet ?—The Prophet guards his steps
Close as his shadow.

Ab. Oft, of late, I see him
Walking the Paradise and neighb'ring orchards,
With studious looks, among the plants and flowers,
With but a slave : there you may meet him daily.

Had. Perhaps Mephibosheth might lend us light :
He watches all things with a dragon's eye.

Ab. Assail him.

Had. Promises may make him speak ;
But golden ones.

Ab. Nay, promise what you must.

Had. And be you ignorant, my lord—that's best.
He carries strength ; for Benjamin would cleave
To any cause that served the House of Saul.

Ab. Go now in search of them. Bid, as you pass,
Ahithophel attend me.

Had. Yes, my lord. (*Exit.*)

Ab. And can it be, my father ? Can thy heart,
Thy lion nature, condescend so low ?
Canst thou still bend those eyes, whose awful beams
Of grace and glory I have coveted
As Heaven, and sought by noblest acts to win,
Still bend their favour on me, as in days
When we together breasted hostile shocks,
And you surveyed me, like the parent ospray
Her young one tow'ring from its native cliff ?
Still canst thou greet me with that brow of love,
Radiant as Moses', yet in secret stab ?
Stab where thou know'st 'twill rankle to the death ?—
If this be so, what need I care for aught ?—
I never in my proudest thought aspired
To his soul's grandeur. Death it is to think
How villainous counsels warp the noble mind
From nature's bias !—Curs'd be his misleaders !—
The crown is mine—by birth, by purchase mine—
And who shall rob me of my glorious right ?—

[*Exit.*.]

SCENE II.

The King's Paradise, without the walls. HADAD pacing up and down one of the walks. He stops as he fronts the city.

Had. 'Tis so ;—the hoary Harper sings aright :
How beautiful is Zion !—Like a queen,
Armed with a helm in virgin loveliness,
Her heaving bosom in a bossy cuirass,
She sits aloft, begirt with battlements
And bulwarks swelling from the rock, to guard
The sacred courts, pavilions, palaces,
Soft gleaming through the umbrage of the woods
Which tuft her summit, and, like raven tresses,
Wave their dark beauty round the Tower of David.
Resplendent with a thousand golden bucklers,
The embrasures of alabaster shine ;

Hailed by the pilgrims of the desert, bound
To Judah's mart with orient merchandise.

But not, for thou art fair and turret-crowned,
Wet with the choicest dew of heaven, and blessed
With golden fruits, and gales of frankincense,
Dwell I beneath thine ample curtains. Here,
Where Saints and Prophets teach, where the stern Law
Still speaks in thunder, where chief Angels watch,
And where the Glory hovers, here I war.

Goaded by love, as by immortal hate
Of Him predicted, o'er the haughty line
I burn to consummate a double triumph—
Ha ! hold—the object of my search approaches.
Now, if the tale be truth indeed, or forged,
(More like,) by dark Ahithophel to rouse⁽¹⁾
The Prince, it matters not. His spirit seethes
With pent ambition, like the Asphaltic caves,
Whose black and bitter substance, boiling up,
A spark will kindle.—This young minion's eye,
Thick clustering auburn curls, and sanguine cheek,
Reveal the destined worshipper of beauty.

Enter SOLOMON, attended by two Slaves.

Good morrow, little Prince.

Sol. Health to you, sir.

Had. What fragrant flowers are those you carry ?

Sol. Buds

Of Median myrtle, mandrake flowers, and camphire.

Had. (*scenting them.*) They're passing sweet.—
What dark-eyed favourite didst thou pluck them for ?

Sol. For none, sir.

Had. Ha, methinks they'd rarely grace
A lily bosom : many an one would heave
At such a token from a gallant Prince.

Sol. I plucked them for my herbal.

Had. Grace defend me,
Ere I had reached your age, I held sweet flowers
Created for no end but to adorn
Young damsels, whose dark locks I loved to braid,
And twine with rosy wreaths, and prank their bosoms.
Intended for the throne, as you are, Prince,
The loveliest virgins in my uncle's court

Caressed me secretly with amorous gifts,
And smiled at favours which I ravished from them.
Should you not like a sweet young loving maid
To toy with, and present with knots of flowers ?

Sol. No, sir.

Had. But why ? it were a harmless pleasure.

Sol. Because I would not waste my spring of youth
In idle dalliance. I would plant rich seeds
To blossom in my manhood, and bear fruit
When I am old. Besides, 'tis said by those
Most like to know, 'tis not for Princes' sons
To follow wantons, or to love spiced drinks.

Had. Kings are meant there, or sons of Kings, at least,
On whom the government will rest ;—but that,
Perchance, will be your lot ?

Sol. Perchance.

Had. Nay, more,

'Tis said the King has named you to the throne ?

Sol. Things, oft, are said.

Had. (*after a pause.*)

But tell me truly, if a beauteous damsel,

Like those young delicates about your mother,
With skin like ermine, cheeks like wind-flowers, hair
Like aragamen, eyes like the gazelle,
Her lips a braid of scarlet—

Sol. Or like my cousin Tamar.

Had. Is she so tempting fair ?

Sol. So Hadad thinks.

Had. Who told you that, my little Prince ?

Sol. Your eyes.

Had. Speak they so plain, indeed ?

Sol Not speak ; they burn.

For when you gaze upon her beauteous face,
I see them kindle like the ruddy lamps
That flame within the tabernacle.

Had. Well,

Do not all eyes the same, whene'er they gaze
On beauteous woman, Nature's masterpiece ?

Sol. No, not like yours.

Had. Hold, here's a box of perfume,
Sent to King Hadad from the farthest east,
From rich Serendib. Smell it, Prince.

Sol. 'Tis rare.—

It glides like magic through me.—Nay, I prithee,
Give 't me again.

Had. (*aside.*) It works.—Behold the lid.

Sol. Ye powers! what matchless youth and maid are
there?

Had. Venus and Tammuz.

Sol. Never did my eyes
Behold a sight so lovely.

Had. Wouldst thou know
Their story?

Sol. Troth, I would.

Had. Then sit we here
Beneath this spreading terebinth. And first,
As you've been straitly watched, and kept so long
In ignorance of things a Prince should know,
I'll tell you by what chance, ere I had reached
Your comely stature, I grew wiser.

Sol. Do.

Had. Behind my uncle's palace spreads a park,
With lawns, and glades, sunn'd plats, and darksome woods,

Through which Abana, limpid as this fount,
Winds gently past delightful arbours, shades,
And green retirements from the noontide heat.

In a sweet solitary nook o'erhung
With trees of ancient beauty, where the stream
Had scooped a little basin, fringed with flowers
Even to the brim, and screen'd from observation
By blossom'd boughs, and aromatic shrubs
Clustering impervious—

Sol. Like the very bank
Where these sweet lovers lie.

Had. Much like it, Prince.

Here had I stolen one day from my attendants,
And lay along beneath a tuft of henna,
Watching the idle water. Soon, I heard
The sound of voices, soft, and silver sweet,
Approaching in the wood. I kept me still.—
Anon, two heavenly damsels of the Queen's
Entered the little arbour, and sat down
Full in my view and hearing. One was white
As the young lily, with luxuriant braids

Of ebony ; the other's blooming cheek,
Like the pomegranate, blushed through locks of gold.
Awhile they talked and laughed, (love all their theme,)
With merry eyes, and bright carnation lips
Which deepen'd as they told their amorous stories.
At last, the dark-haired maid proposed to cool
Their limbs and glowing bosoms in Abana,
Unsandall'd her fair foot, undid the clasps,
And drew the jewell'd buskin from a leg
Of ivory, to try the water's——

Enter NATHAN, from a walk near them.

—Ha ! Prince,
The box !

Sol. (running to Nath.)
Look, father, what a beauteous pair !
And smell the perfume Hadad gave to me :
'Tis sweeter than the richest aloes.

[*The Prophet examines the box of perfume ; then dashes it on the ground. It flashes, and rises in smoke.]*

Nath. (approaching Hadad sternly.)

Who, what art thou, foul poisoner ?—How durst thou
 Abuse with forms and philters this young prince ?—
 Who art thou ?—Is it for the love of sin ?—
 Or art thou leagued, for some infernal purpose,
 With Hell against the House of David ?—Speak—
 Who art thou ?

Had. (pale and agitated.)

One unused to terms like these,
 And will requite them, reverend man of God.

Nath. Glare not upon me with those fiendlike eyes,
 Thou haggard, trembling, guilt-confounded wretch.
 I curse thee, and defy thee, in Heaven's name !
 Come, boy.

[*Exit with Sol.*]

Had. Would Hell's eternal fire were round thee ! Hell's
 Undying viper gnawing at thy heart !—

[*Pacing violently to and fro, checks himself,
 as fearful of being observed.*]

Whence, wherefore this detested flesh can front
 Worst death, yet quails before a tottering bald-head—

Whence could he come, with such a thief-like step ?
Curs'd clods ! too dull for aught but thunder—Ha!

Enter ABSALOM, at a distance.

He comes to know our conference—'Tis well—
Gloom and resentment in his mien. He seems
Prepared for darker searching.—When he shakes
Those ominous locks, I know the clime within,
As the wind's temper by the lashing woods.

Ab. What ! hast thou seen him ?

Had. Yes, my lord.

Ab. What said

The cockatrice ?

Had. Wary and shrewd he seems,
And shunned my questions ; lesson'd well, no doubt.
Ere I had fully proved him, Nathan broke
Imperiously upon us, and, with threats,
Dragged him away.

Ab. I'll know, if Hell be moved
To answer.

Had. Have you seen Ahithophel?

Ab. He smooths it o'er, but shakes his head, and looks
More than he dares confess.

Had. What! will not speak?

Ab. Not plainly, but believes, or doubts, at least ;
But I must be resolved. The howling damn'd
Know not my suffering, for they know their doom,
And steel them to endurance. Thus to live,
With hate and love, revolt and reverence,
Fighting like hungry vultures for my heart,
I cannot, will not, long.

Had. Now would to grace
Some way—some thought—

Ab. Hast seen Mephibosheth?

Had. My lord—(*Pauses as in reflection.*)

Ab. What is't ?—Declare thy mind.

Had. I almost fear—but, were I Israel's Prince,
I knew my counsel.

Ab. Palter not.

Had. My lord,
A wondrous man is in Jerusalem,

Arrived three nights ago from Babylon,
Bound into Egypt to consult the Sages
Touching events foretold the Assyrian King.
He draws his lineage and his power from one
Named in your Chronicles, who prophesied
The Star from Jacob, and who trebly blessed
The conquering people whom the Lords of Moab
Called him to curse, the potent sage of Pethor,
Chief of the ancient Magi. None has since
Equalled his power or piercing eye, till now ;
But this far-seeing Mage, 'tis said, has viewed
Earth's consummation, and declared what shall be
When the last star expires.

Ab. What, Balaam-Haddon ?

Had. He's here ; but keeps himself from public view.

A Syrian who had known him, like myself,
In Babylon, observed his caravan
Enter an obscure court. I went, and saw.—
The awful front, and eye oracular
Were his indeed. I would consult him, Prince.

Ab. (*after a brief pause.*)

But such an act might blast me. Were it known,
Idolatry! would ring from Dan to Besor.

Had. Thence, I was doubtful to propose the step;
Not that I held you awed by Moses' threats.*
But could not I obtain the intelligence,
Without your motion?

Ab. That, indeed,—

Had. I burn
To know another thing, more near to you
Than me, which this great Magian could resolve.

Ab. What's that?

Had. What Spirit 'tis that serves your father.

Ab. Spirit!

Had. Many suppose he holds some God, or Demon
Bond-servant to his throne, who works his will,
And hath assisted all his mighty deeds.

* “The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards,—I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.” **LEVIT. xx. 6.**

Ab. This is believed ?

Had. Many believe it here,
And 'tis the current faith of neighbouring Kings.
No marvel it has missed your ear, my lord,
For you pay outward reverence to the Law,
And are his son. Nor is it strange, methinks,
Nor passing reason. Look at his broad realm,
Stretched from Euphrates to the Western Sea,
From Elath to Orontes. Where is Edom ?
Philistia ? Ammon ? Where the Syrian thrones,
Coeval with the world ? Who smote the Chaldee ?
Broke Elam's bow ? and taught the Desert hordes
To shun his dangerous frontier ? Who hath scaped
Perils unnumbered ; hunted, like a wolf,
From den to den by King and people ? Who
In fourscore stricken battles bathed his sword
In bloodiest conflict, yet sustains no scar ?
Who, weaponless, o'erthrew the Giant ? Who
Hath piled the gold and jewels till his vaults
Resemble spirit-mines ? Who plucks the trunks
Of Lebanon, and bids them arch his roofs,

Or heaps them in the vale like river reeds ?
Who takes the spirit captive with his strings,
Charming the ear with magic melody,
Or sweeps his sounding kinnor till the soul
Ascends the heaven of ecstasy ? My lord,
Who hath done more than these ? in war, in peace,
The minion of the time, excelling all
The Kings of earth, as yonder radiant sun
The inferior orbs of heaven?—A shepherd-boy.

Ab. True, Hadad, and it irks my inmost soul
To break my faith with such a father. Were
He less, my sin would be so.

Had. If he wrong'd me,
Though brighter than the fabled Seraphim,—
Were he the God I worshipped,—I'd fall off.

Ab. Misery attends me either way.

Had. My lord,
Think o'er the hist'ry of his birth, whom foes
Would foist above you ; imp of an adulteress !
Remember brave Uriah bearing back
His doom, to leave the beauteous harlot free !

Had this been, if the Lord protects his fortunes ?
Or such a guilt-avenging Being live ?
No,—I would learn by what presiding Genius
He works his wonders ;—how subjected first ;—
Whether attracted by his minstrelsy ;—
Or by some power residing in his star ;—
Or how ; for various are the ways to win
Ascendancy o'er Spirits ;—and this power
We know is his ; for, while a beardless stripling,
His skill expelled a demon from his master.
Perhaps, my lord, power strong enough exists,
To break the pact, and lure him to your service.

Ab. Well,—see the Mage : prove if his visioned eye
Can tell us what hath chanced. I've deeper reason
Than you suspect, to prize their star-taught lore.
Pray him to cast our horoscopes, both mine,
And his, we fear ; as for the rest, inquire
Or leave it, as you will. Thou hast not yet
Sounded Mephibosheth ?

Had. Not yet, my lord.

Ab. Then do not, till we know the present issue.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The house of OBIL. OBIL and MALCUTH. A knocking.

Obil. Woman, who knocks there?

Mal. (*looking through the lattice.*)

The crook-back Maugrabin.

Obil. Ha! open, Malcuth, open.

Mal. Do 't thyself,

The elvish slave shall knock till doom, ere I

Unsheath a bolt.

Obil. Peace, shrew. (*Opens the door.*)

Enter MAUGRABIN.

Mal. Spawn of the Nile,

What seek'st thou with us?

Maug. Thy fair company.—

Here, Obil, take this casket—guard it safely—

There's more in't than would purchase all your tribe,
Nay, every hoof that roams upon the desert.
Trust it to no hand but your master's.

Obil. Whose?

The King's?

Maug. Forsooth! thou feed'st his dromedaries,
And he feeds thee. But is it on his gold
Thou found'st the hope to see thy lovely sands
Once more, and view, at ease, from thy broad tent
Camels, and asses, flocks, and herds, and slaves
About thee like the Patriarch? Call him
Thy lord, who makes thee lord o'er others. No ;—
Thy master Hadad.

Obil. I'll obey.

Maug. (*to Malcuth.*) Farewell, sweet leopardess!

[*Signs to OBIL, who lays the casket on the table,*
and follows him out.]

Mal. They're whispering—
Now, by our mother Hagar, but I'll see
What wond'rous treasure 'tis. (*opens the casket.*) A lying
knave!

'Tis nothing but a monstrous key—enchased
 As for some royal sepulchre—Ha ! how ?—
 It will not close—and Maugrabin's returning.

[*Throws it down, and exit.*]

SCENE IV.

The terraced roof of ABSALOM's house, by night; adorned with vases of flowers, and fragrant shrubs: an awning spread over part of it. TAMAR and HADAD.

Tam. No, no, I well remember—proofs, you said,
 Unknown to Moses.

Had. Well, my love, thou know'st
 I've been a traveller in various climes ;
 Trod Ethiopia's scorching sands, and scaled
 The snow-clad mountains ; trusted to the deep ;
 Traversed the fragrant islands of the sea,
 And with the Wise conversed of many nations.

Tam. I know thou hast.

Had. Of all mine eyes have seen,
The greatest, wisest, and most wonderful,
Is that dread sage, the Ancient of the Mountain.

Tam. Who ?

Had. None knows his lineage, age, or name : his locks
Are like the snows of Caucasus ; his eyes
Beam with the wisdom of collected ages.
In green unbroken years, he sees, 'tis said,
The generations pass, like autumn fruits,
Garnered, consumed, and springing fresh to life,
Again to perish, while he views the sun,
The seasons roll, in rapt serenity,
And high communion with celestial powers.
Some say 'tis Shem, our father, some say Enoch,
And some Melchisideck.

Tam. I've heard a tale
Like this, but ne'er believed it.

Had. I have proved it.—
Through perils dire, dangers most imminent,
Seven days and nights midst rocks and wildernesses,
And boreal snows, and never-thawing ice,

Where not a bird, a beast, a living thing,
 Save the far-soaring vulture comes, I dared
 My desperate way, resolved to know, or perish.

Tam. Rash, rash advent'rer !

Had. On the highest peak
 Of stormy Caucasus, there blooms a spot
 On which perpetual sunbeams play, where flowers
 And verdure never die ; and there he dwells.

Tam. But did'st thou see him ?

Had. Never did I view
 Such awful majesty : his reverend locks
 Hung like a silver mantle to his feet,
 His raiment glistered saintly white, his brow
 Rose like the gate of Paradise, his mouth
 Was musical as its bright guardians' songs.

Tam. What did he tell thee ? O ! what wisdom fell
 From lips so hallowed ?

Had. Whether he possess
 The Tetragrammaton,—the powerful Name
 Inscribed on Moses' rod, by which he wrought
 Unheard of wonders, which constrains the Heavens

To shower down blessings, shakes the earth, and rules
The strongest Spirits ; or if God hath given
A delegated power, I cannot tell.

But 'twas from him I learned their fate, their fall,
Who, erewhile, wore resplendent crowns in Heaven ;
Now, scattered through the earth, the air, the sea.
Them he compels to answer, and from them
Has drawn what Moses, nor no mortal ear,
Has ever heard.

Tam. But did he tell it thee ?

Had. He told me much—more than I dare reveal ;
For with a dreadful oath he sealed my lips.

Tam. But canst thou tell me nothing ?—Why unfold
So much, if I must hear no more ?

Had. You bade

Explain my words, almost reproached me, sweet,
For what by accident escaped me.

Tam. Ah !

A little—something tell me—sure, not all
Were words inhibited.

Had. Then, promise never,
Never to utter of this conference
A breath to mortal.

Tam. Solemnly I vow.

Had. Even then, 'tis little I can say, compared
With all the marvels he related.

Tam. Come,
I'm breathless—Tell me how they sinn'd, how fell.

Had. Their Head, their Prince involved them in his ruin.

Tam. What black offence on his devoted head
Drew endless punishment ?

Had. The wish to be
Like the All-Perfect.

Tam. Arrogating that
Due only to his Maker ! awful crime !
But what their doom ? their place of punishment ?

Had. Above, about, beneath ; earth, sea, and air ;
Their habitations various as their minds,
Employments, and desires.⁽²⁾

Tam. But are they round us, Hadad ? not confined
In penal chains and darkness ?

Had. So he said ;
And so your holy books infer. What saith
Your Prophet ? what the Prince of Uz ?

Tam. I shudder,
Lest some dark Minister be near us now.

Had. You wrong them. They are bright Intelligences,
Robbed of some native splendour, and cast down,
'Tis true, from Heaven ; but not deformed, and foul,
Revengeful, malice-working Fiends, as fools
Suppose. They dwell, like Princes, in the clouds ;
Sun their bright pinions in the middle sky ;
Or arch their palaces beneath the hills,
With stones inestimable studded so,
That sun or stars were useless there.

Tam. Good heavens !

Had. He bade me look on rugged Caucasus,
Crag piled on crag beyond the utmost ken,
Naked, and wild, as if creation's ruins
Were heaped in one immeasurable chain
Of barren mountains, beaten by the storms
Of everlasting winter. But, within

Are glorious palaces, and domes of light,
 Irradiate halls, and crystal colonnades,
 Vaults set with gems the purchase of a crown,
 Blazing with lustre past the noon-tide beam,
 Or, with a milder beauty, mimicking
 The mystic signs of changeful Mazzaroth.

Tam. Unheard of splendour !

Had. There they dwell, and muse,
 And wander ; Beings beautiful, immortal,
 Minds vast as heaven, capacious as the sky,
 Whose thoughts connect past, present, and to come,
 And glow with light intense, imperishable.
 Thus, in the sparry chambers of the Sea
 And Air-Pavilions, rainbow Tabernacles,
 They study Nature's secrets, and enjoy
 No poor dominion..

Tam. Are they beautiful,
 And powerful far beyond the human race ?

Had. Man's feeble heart cannot conceive it. When
 The sage described them, fiery eloquence
 Flowed from his lips, his bosom heaved, his eyes

Grew bright and mystical ; moved by the theme,
Like one who feels a deity within.

Tam. Wondrous!—What intercourse have they with men?

Had. Sometimes they deign to intermix with man,
But oft with woman.

Tam. Ha ! with woman ?

Had. She

Attracts them with her gentler virtues, soft,
And beautiful, and heavenly, like themselves.
They have been known to love her with a passion
Stronger than human.

Tam. That surpasses all
You yet have told me.

Had. This the Sage affirms ;
And Moses, darkly.

Tam. How do they appear ?
How manifest their love ?

Had. Sometimes 'tis spiritual, signified
By beatific dreams, or more distinct
And glorious apparition.—They have stooped

To animate a human form, and love
Like mortals.

Tam. Frightful to be so beloved !
Who could endure the horrid thought !—What makes
Thy cold hand tremble ? or is't mine
That feels so deathy ?

Had. Dark imaginations haunt me
When I recall the dreadful interview.

Tam. O, tell them not—I would not hear them.

Had. But why contemn a Spirit's love ? so high,
So glorious, if he haply deigned ?—

Tam. Forswear
My Maker ! love a Demon !

Had. No—O, no—
My thoughts but wandered—Oft, alas ! they wander.

Tam. Why dost thou speak so sadly now?—And lo !
Thine eyes are fixed again upon Arcturus.
Thus ever, when thy drooping spirits ebb,
~~Thou~~ gazest on that star. Hath it the power
To cause or cure thy melancholy mood ?—

[*He appears lost in thought.*]

Tell me, ascrib'st thou influence to the stars ?

Had. (*starting.*) The stars ! What know'st thou of the stars ?

Tam. I know that they were made to rule the night.

Had. Like palace lamps ! Thou echoest well thy grand-sire.

Woman ! the stars are living, glorious,
Amazing, infinite !

Tam. Speak not so wildly.—

I know them numberless, resplendent, set
As symbols of the countless, countless years
That make eternity.

Had. Eternity !—

Oh ! mighty, glorious, miserable thought !—
Had ye endured like those great sufferers,
Like them, seen ages, myriad ages roll ;
Could ye but look into the void abyss
With eyes experienced, unobscured by torments,—
Then mightst thou name it, name it feelingly.

Tam. What ails thee, Hadad ?—Draw me not so close.

Had. Tamar ! I need thy love—more than thy love—

Tam. Thy cheek is wet with tears—Nay, let us part—

'Tis late—I cannot, must not linger.—

[*Breaks from him, and exit.*]]

Had. Loved and abhorred!—Still, still accrû'd!—

[*He paces, twice or thrice, up and down, with
passionate gestures; then turns his face to
the sky, and stands a moment in silence.*]]

—Oh! where,

In the illimitable space, in what

Profound of untried misery, when all

His worlds, his rolling orbs of light, that fill

With life and beauty yonder infinite,

Their radiant journey run, for ever set,

Where, where, in what abyss shall I be groaning?

[*Exit.*]]

A C T III.

SCENE I. *The inner apartment of DAVID's sepulchre, filled with treasure : a sarcophagus of Egyptian porphyry standing in the centre. Enter ABSALOM, HADAD and BALAAM-HADDON, as from another chamber of the tomb. B. HADDON carries a lamp, and a silver vessel for the burning of perfume.*

B. Hadd. Behold, my lord, the last and richest ! Here, Nothing but gold of Ophir, pearls, and gems Of priceless value. How they catch the lamp beams, And sparkle as I wave it, like the stars Upon a fitful night of clouds. And lo ! The marble in whose womb he means to sleep.

Ab. It strikes me dumb—what heaps, what mountain piles !

The pillage of the world were scarce enough
To sum the riches we have gazed upon.

Had. But whence can he have drawn them ? there's the question.

He has pulled down, indeed, some barbarous thrones,
Made Syria tributary, and brought home
Rich spoil ; but in the chambers of this rock ⁽³⁾
Are treasures which the empires of the earth,
United, cannot equal. Whence they come
I'm bent to know. His flocks, and herds, and tilth,
Vineyards, and olive-grounds, and all he draws
Of yearly revenue from all the tribes,
From Elath, and the Eastern caravans,
Shrink to an alms.

Ab. I know not what to think.

The Mage must answer.

Had. Balaam-Haddon, speak.

B. Hadd. If there be power in incantations, spells,
Or potency in stars, or strongest magic,
Or compounds such as these, some one shall answer.

[Places the vessel on the farther part of the sarcophagus,
heaps drugs upon it, and kindles them by the lamp.]

Stand by me here, my lords :—Observe, but speak not.

[A thick smoke rises, which envelopes the remoter part of
the tomb : ABSALOM and HADAD stand with their eyes
intently fixed upon it : B. HADDON mutters an incantation,
casting, from time to time, perfumes upon the flame. A
form becomes dimly visible amidst the smoke ; its eyes and
countenance sparkling. ABSALOM continues silently ga-
zing. B. HADD. turns to him.]

Address your questions briefly ; when the smoke
Decays, it vanishes.

Ab. Who art thou ?

Spirit. The Genius of the Throne.

Ab. Servest thou the King ?

Spirit. I serve the Throne, and him who sits thereon.

Ab. Implying thou mightst serve his son ?

Spirit. If he

Were chief in Jewry.

Ab. Canst thou make him so ?

Spirit. No, nor oppose : I have no present power
Upon the blood of David.

Had. Prince, mark that.

Ab. Canst thou foresee—Know'st thou the past ?

Spirit. Dim shadows of the future lie before me,
Like forms in twilight : all things past I know.

Ab. Then answer, I adjure thee, for to this
Wert thou evoked. Is Solomon elect
To David's throne ? Has he received the unction ?

Spirit. The kingly oil hath flowed upon his locks.

Had. Change not, my lord.—What boots a horn of oil
Against that sword, that military arm,
Thy power in Israel ?

Ab. And now I care not—Heaven or Hell to aid,
I'll prove the issue. Spirit, art thou bound
By ties indissoluble to the King ?

Spirit. I serve the Throne, till thrice three times revolve.

Ab. Three times—

B. Hadd. So Spirits reckon ; he will not reveal.—
Who bound thee ?

Spir. Jesse's son.

B. Hadd. Serv'st thou in love ?

Spirit. No ; for he hath not kept his covenant.

Ab. But shall the son of Bathsheba be King ?

Spirit. He may be, or may not.

Ab. How know'st thou that ?

Spirit. I read it in thy horoscope.

Ab. Know'st thou

My destiny ?

Spirit. I know what may be.

Ab. Speak,

Reveal, I do beseech thee, mighty Power,

How I may hold my lawful birthright.

B. Hadd. Speak.

Spirit. What said the Chaldee whom thou saw'st at Geshur ?

Ab. Ha !

Spirit. What answer brought he from the palace tower
Of Talmai, on the night of Pentecost ?

Ab. The holy Gods !

Spirit. A hostile Planet near allied to thee,
Threatens eclipse and blood ; o'ercome but that,
And length of days, and glory shall be thine.

That powerful Star is Solomon's, and rides
Hard by the ascendant.

Ab. But hath not yet attained it ?

Spirit. It enters on the seventh of Tisri.

Ab. Gods !

Had. So near ?

Ab. Direct me. How can I o'ercome ?

Spirit. Possess the crown ere Tisri.

Ab. Shall I, then,

Be fortunate ?

Spirit. Beyond thy father, or the happiest mortal.

Ab. And thou wilt serve me ?

Spirit. As I now do him.

B. Hadd. Reveal the nature of thy services.

Spirit. I give him strength, enlarge his heart, protect
His life, extend his realm, diffuse his glory,
And rifle, at his bidding, earth, and sea.

B. Hadd. Thou brought'st these treasures then ?

Spirit. My servants did.

Ab. Stay—tell me—shall I see thee—

Spirit. When thou sitt'st
Upon thy father's throne.

[*The smoke disperses, the image fades
and disappears.*]

Ab. By Astaroth !

My faith extended not to this : the words,
The self-same syllables, ne'er breathed to mortal,
In which a potent Chaldee summed my fate.

Had. Nothing escapes them.

Ab. Hence, Hadad, hence my fears,
My cares, my policy, my flattering arts
To win the people, and strike root so deep
That none could pluck me :—Ever in my ears
Rung the presaging voice ;—and years of toil
Yield but this hairbreadth. How, in half a moon,
Could I have built my name to that great height,
Needful to front my father's power ? how sought
The dangerous elements ? how organized them ?
Now, like Manoah's son, my hidden strength
Can shake the kingdom when my trumpet sounds.

Had. (*to B. Hadd.*)

What seest thou ?—what transports thee ?—what's the wonder ?

B. Hadd. Lo ! on the far horizon towers a form
 Enthroned upon a pedestal so high
 That East and West behold it ; nations kneel
 To kiss its base ; the symbol in its hand
 Marks universal power ; its radiant head
 Bears to the sky a diadem so bright
 That suns look pale ; its arm gigantic crests
 Heaven, like the zodiac, and o'erawes the world ;
 Mountains unhoard their treasures, ocean breaks
 Obedient at its footstool ; every tongue
 And people shout, Hosanna to the Son
 Of David !

Had. (*starting.*) Ha !

Ab. He faints.

Had. The wonted trance—

Thus lay the son of Beor on Mount Pisgah,
 By Balak's altars.—Powers Demonian, mark,
 Record ! (*aside.*)

Ab. But heard you how he spake ?

Had. He spake

The Spirit's bidding, Prince. Observed you not
The supernatural brightness of his eye,
The majesty that swelled his form, his voice
How godlike ? Into him the Shadow passed,
Foretold, and left him.

Ab. Darest thou hope for me
So vast an empire, so magnificent ?

Had. My lord, my lord, thou deem'st this little realm
Much, and aspir'st, as to the top of glory,
To rule these Tribes, and curb the neighbour Kings ;
But seest not, for thou hast not roamed the world,
Kingdoms on kingdoms opening to thy view,
In prospect dazzling as the vales of Heaven ;
Thrones ancient as the Flood, where mighty Kings
Rule, toward the rising sun, o'er plains where gold,
And ivory, and aloes, and almug,
Abound like olives on the hills of Judah,
Or palms by Jericho, where spicy Isles
Perfume the seas, and coral rocks and pearl

Glitter along the shore. There thou mayst win
Thy conquering way, there plant thy throne, and wield
The universal sceptre.

Ab. Is thy tongue
Endued with witchcraft ?

Had. None thou need'st, to stand
The World's acknowledged Master. Hadst thou not
The Spirit's promise, in these caves behold
A talisman, and in thy father's veterans
Unshinking agents to thy boldest wish.
He from the sheep-cote to the sceptre rose ;
Thou, with that sceptre, grasped in manhood's prime,
Mayst subjugate mankind. But such designs
Require immediate action, cannot linger
An old man's ebbing sands : that were to lose
Irreparable time, which, seized, extends
Thy empire past the pillars of Sesostris.

Ab. Come, these are fond conceits that make one giddy.
The place, or hour, or that unearthly form,
Whose thrilling accents vibrate in my ears,
Or thy wild visions, or these heaps of gold,

Disorder me. My brain seems all on fire,
Yet a sepulchral coldness numbs my heart.
Let's leave this treasure-house of death. I'll pause,
This night, upon it. If to-morrow dawn
Upon my unchanged purpose, thou must speed
To Geshur, and, perhaps, Damascus.

Had. Look,
The Mage recovers ; let us lead him hence.*

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An apartment in OBIL's house : OBIL and MALCUTH.

Mal. What shakes thee so, and makes thee look so pale ?
Obil. That dromedary Fiend—that beast of Hell—
Lean, black, and demon-like, it stands ; it eats not,

* "He," (Manasseh, King of Judah,) "observed times, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a Familiar Spirit."—2 CHRON. xxxiii. 6.

Drinks not to satisfy an ass's foal ;
 But ruminates the livelong day, and glares
 Upon me when I enter, with an eye
 Of such unnatural meaning, that I quake
 Lest human words should follow. In the gloom,
 Its eyeballs burn like living fire. Just now,
 As in the twilight trembling I approached it,
 I thought—by Heaven, I thought she folded quickly
 A griffin wing.

Mal. What senseless prate is this ?

Obil. And when I wait, by night, without the walls,
 Long ere his step is audible, she snorts,
 Springs, rears, and trembles, turns her flaring nostril
 Up toward the midnight clouds, and paws, and spurns,
 And vanishes, when Hadad mounts, as yet,
 Earth-born Aashari* never did.

Mal. And this
 Has blanched thy manhood so ?

Obil. I've mark'd, besides,

* The fleetest kind of dromedary.

When from his night-career, at dawn, he comes,
Though flaked with foam, and panting like a steed
That has outstripped the ostrich, not a hair
Is stained, nor speck of clay deforms her limbs.
Hassid, our son, is bold, and he declares,
On a wild night while he by Kedron stood
Awaiting in my stead, a spectral voice
Accosted Hadad ere beyond his hearing,
And in the hollow wind their accents mingled.

Mal. His fear, you mean, mistook the wind for voices.

Obil. After this present business, whose blind haste
Betides to beasts and riders length of rest,
I'll to my tents : I've gold enough : I'll tend
No demon coursers, though a Prince bestride them.

Mal. Thou'dst hold the rein barehead' to Beelzebub,
So he would stuff thy turban folds with shekels.

Obil. Peace, cassowar ! Has Maugrabin been here ?
By this, he said the Princes would assemble.
The watch is set : The couriers are come in,
And lodged by Hassid o'er the city gate.

Mal. Know you the purpose of these meetings, Obil ?

Obil. Hush, no.—They bode more good to Ishmael
Than cocker'd Isaac—Hark! (*A knocking.*) They're come.
Begone.

[*Exit MALCUTH.*]

[*OBIL passes through an outer room to the door, and returns assisting in MEPHIBOSHETH.*]

Mephib. Look to my mule, good fellow, wilt thou, quick?
Take her from sight.—Are they not come?

Obil. Not yet,
My lord, but 'tis the hour.

Mephib. Well, dally not. [*Exit OBIL.*]
Now let me breathe—no eye beholds me here—
But in the streets, methought, each one I met
Gazed on me, whispering with suspicious looks,
Where goes Mephibosheth at this dusk hour? ⁽⁴⁾
Voices and feet seemed following me.—'Tis strange.—
How oft have I preferred the evening shade
To visit Ramah, or go down to Bethel,
Pleased with the starry dimness! Now, the night
Seems but the pall of guilt. Conspiracy!
If thou canst look so grim to me,—dethroned,

Dishonoured, stript of all my noblest rights,—
How colourest thou thy devilish front to him
The chief conspirer ? Or, is this but weakness ?
The child of melancholy ? nerves unused
To dangerous action ?—I have gazed on him,
So long, as Heaven's Vicegerent, the bare thought
Of lifting rebel hands against him, thrills
Like sacrilege ; to pluck him from his power,
Seems as to rend a ruling spring from nature,
Whence wreck and chaos follow.—Think, my soul,
On red Gilboa ! on the walls of Bethshan !
There hung the Anointed, while an outlaw snatched
His blood-stained emblems !—If our compact hold
He yet shall render bitter tears to Saul
And mourn, in strains sincere, the Mighty fallen.
I know not why I doubt.—They promise fair—
And Absalom respects his pledge.—That Syrian—
His subtlety eludes me ; yea, a sense
Of secret and inexplicable fear
Steals o'er me while I gaze into his bright

Unfathomable eye—Soft ! I must hide
Distrust beneath a smiling aspect now.

[Enter ABSALOM, HADAD, AHITHOPHEL, MANASSES,
*and MALCHIAH, muffled in their mantles, followed
by OBIL, who bolts and bars the door.*]

Ab. Good even, Prince.

Ahith. Prosperity to Benjamin.

(HADAD speaks aside with OBIL.)

Mephib. Health to my lord, to grave Ahithophel,
To all.

Ab. What, are the couriers come ?

Had. The warden of the gate, good Obil's son,
Has them in custody.

Ab. Admit them.

Had. Stay—

Were it not best receive them separately ?

Ab. No matter.

Ahith. One by one, my lord, were best.

Ab. Bring in the Hittite from beyond the Jordan.

[Exit OBIL.]

There lie my strongest fears.—Sit nearer, friends—

In Gilead there are some of wealth and power,
So rooted I could never shake them.

Ahith. All
Grown old and weak with him, and impotent
For good or evil. Fear them not, my lord.—
Nay, look not on my hoary locks, for what
Am I but an expiring voice, a flame
Blazing a moment to direct thy path,
And then extinct for ever?

Re-enter OBIL, introducing a Courier.

Ab. Approach. Whence comest thou?

Courier. From Edrai.

Ab. Thou went'st by Bethabara :—thence what course?

Courier. I crossed, my lord, by Bethabara, thence
Along the woods of Abarim to Heshbon,
Met there the chiefs of Gad and Reuben ; thence,
Through Saron, mountain Ramoth, and Rogelim,
That night to Edrai.

Ab. Whom saw'st thou there ?

Courier. Both Princes of Manasseh.

Ab. What despatches ?

Courier, (*unbuckling his belt.*)

This girdle for my lord.

Ab. No more ?

Courier. Nothing.

Ab. 'Tis well. Go to thy house. Have Puath near.

[*Exit Courier.*]

[*ABSALOM draws from the inside of the girdle two small rolls, which he opens and reads.*]

Lo ! as I said, we cannot trust in Gilead :

Ramoth, Rogelim, Lodebar, and Jazer,

With stubborn Mahanaim stand. But see,

My friends, what strength is left us yet o'er Jordan.

The cities charactered in red are ours ;

The sable his ; the others doubtful. Mark

How we outnumber them. Observe that cipher

Concluding both. That bids us on. I named

The time—the manner—all the enterprise,

And asked their answer.

Ahith. Wise it is : no foe
So formidable as delay.

Ab. Call Puath.

Ahith. (*still looking at the rolls.*)
Jazer, and Lodebar—My lords, what are they ?
Fenced cities ; but with helpless people filled ;
Tillers, and artisans ; no men of war
Hang there the shield.

Enter Second Courier.

Ab. What bearest thou ?

Courier. These signets. (*Drawing five signets linked together, from his bosom.*)

Ab. I know them. What of these ?

Courier. I was bid say,
Mount Zalmon will reply to Hebron's call,
Ebal repeat it, Tabor waft the note,
And Carmel echo it to Lebanon.

Ab. Aught more ?

Courier. The words, Strike ! Prosper !

Ab. Faithful Puath,

Go rest thee now. (*Exit Courier.*) Open, thou flying Hind
Of Naphtali, that wont to bring good tidings.

[*Unscrews one of the signets, takes from it a small folded writing, glances over it, and hands it to Ahithophel.*]

'Tis from Pagiæl, Prince of Naphtali,
Written in Ephraim. All the northern Tribes
To Benjamin, are sure :—He has passed down,
He says, communing with our friends as far
As Shiloh. Twenty thousand valiant men
Wait but our summons.

Ahith. Welcome news.

Ab. Call the remaining messenger. This last
Has visited the west and south ; an old
And trusted follower.

Enter Third Courier.

—What tidings, Caleb,
From the hill country ?

Courier. Every face, my Prince,
Is lifted to salute the expected sun.

Ahith. All tiptoe on the mountains, say'st thou?—Well,
A speedy and a glorious dawn awaits them,
A rising such as Judah never saw.

Ab. What cities hast thou greeted?

Courier. All the chief
From Ajalon to Kadesh.—This, from Giloh,
My lord Ahithophel; this from the chiefs
Of Ziph and Lachish.

[*Takes letters from the folds of his cap for ABSALOM
and AHITHOPHEL.*]

Ahith. (*after perusing his despatches.*)
All's well; and bids us not delay.

Ab. This missive
Seals our resolves. It comes from Ithamar.
Our royal trumpet will be blown in Hebron
At the sixth hour to-morrow.

Mephib. (*starting.*) How! to-morrow?

Malchi. To-morrow, Prince?

Ab. Ten thousand men encamp

Before it ere that hour. By eventide,
The news must be beyond the Kishon.

Mephib. (*aside.*) Moses !

Ahith. Be not surprised, my lords : Our safety lies
In suddenness. The cloud is in the heaven,
The bolt must fly, or men will shun it.

Manass. Yes, but—

Had. Pardon, my lord Manasses,—I am rude,—
And sage Ahithophel, our reverend Thummim,
Grant me a word. We twice have been convened,
Without our friends Malchiah and Manasses.
Briefly to them I state what you have heard.—
I have myself passed through the Tribes ; with all
The Princes, Judges, powerful of our friends,
Held personal conf'rence ; to the nicest point
Instructed them ; ta'en pledges ; armed their mouths
With potent arguments ; explaining thus
The strong necessity of all we do.
The King, whom Heaven preserve ! declined in years,
Lets fall the reins ; oppressors lord it; wrongs
Cry in the streets with none to hear ; the Judge

Sits not between the gates ; the King nor hears,
Nor substitutes : imperious Joab rules
God's heritage, and shakes his bloody hand
Over the innocent : old Nathan sits
Close at his master's ear, whispering against
The People's Chosen, bent to crown the Boy,
Whom secretly, 'tis said, he hath affianced
To Pharaoh's infant daughter. When the fit
Of penitential horror shakes the King,
He talks of Amnon—fratricide—and blood
Demanding expiation, and alarms
His mind infirm with guilt and punishment.
Thus stands the kingdom ; thus your cherished hopes
Totter to downfal. And will warlike Israel
Behold her lawful, her beloved Prince
Undone by treacherous instruments ? submit
Her stainless sceptre to a murderer's hand ?
For what awes ruthless Joab from the crown
But Absalom ? Think you, a Prince's blood,
A helpless youth, were sacred in his sight
If David slept, and Absalom were not,

Who, only, never feared him ? Men of Israel,
Would you perpetuate your royal line,
Age must resign the rod of power to manhood.—
With these, my lords, and other arguments
Suggested by the wise Ahithophel,
Are they replenished, and prepared for action.

Manass. Then let us on.

Had. My uncle promises
Full fifteen thousand footmen, and is pledged
A thousand chariots, and five thousand horse
By Hadadezer, if the sword decide it :
Our grandsire Talmai empties all his realm.

Malchi. I'm satisfied, my lord.

Mephib. Sirs, may the son of Saul
A moment's audience crave ?

Ab. Speak, noble Prince.

Mephib. My lord, I have allied to this great cause
The strongest Tribe save Judah. I demand
Recognition, before these witnesses,
Of promises not mentioned, as methinks
Were meet, before this solemn sitting.

Had. (*smiling sarcastically aside.*) Ha!

Mephib. I claim your oath, that, if by me, the strength
Of Benjamin were added, you would bound
Your power by Jordan eastward, and resign
The ancient sovereignty of Ishbosheth
To me, the lineal heir. (*A pause.*)

Manass. Can this be so?

Malchi. Divide the sceptre!

Ahith. Never!

Mephib. But he hath sworn it.

Ab. If the Tribes consented.

Mephib. The pledge was absolute—

There stands your organ. Let him answer.

Ab. Hadad?

Had. My lord Mephihosheth, if I err not,
The promise was conditional.

Mephib. 'Tis false!

By heaven, my lords, it was a solemn gage—
Unclogged—and bound his honour to enforce it.

[*HAD. draws ABSALOM apart.*]

Manass. We have no right to mutilate the sceptre;
The royalty is Judah's.

Ahith. Fixed in him :

A right perpetual promised.

Mephib. Mock me not

With solemn words. By what right sit ye here
In treasonous council? Plead ye right for this—

Had. The sooner, Prince, the better; suddenly.

Ab. (*to Mephib.*) The question of divided sovereignty,
Requiring grave debate, and general sanction,
Must wait the assembling of the Tribes, my lord.—
Let us dissolve now : all is understood.

My father's leave is won, to sacrifice
In solemn state at Hebron, to fulfil
My vow in Geshur. Meet me there to-morrow.
The flower of Judah will attend in arms.

Stir with the dawn ; nor marvel if ye spy
Friends of the King upon the way : I've bid
Two hundred follow us, the more to cloak
The enterprise. And now, my lords, farewell.

Manass. Farewell.

Malchi. Farewell and prosper, noble Prince.

Ab. Take separate streets, you who ascend to Zion.

I keep the west, by Millo.

Manass. We'll be guarded.

[*Exeunt all but HADAD, MEPHIBOSHETH, and OBIL.*]

Mephib. (*aside.*) This is my recompense
For trusting traitors!—Fellow, bring my mule.

Had. Stay.—

You go not forth to-night.

Mephib. Not forth! Presum'st thou——

Had. Refrain from passion, Prince: it will not boot you.

Mephib. Now, by the bones of Saul—Bring forth my mule.

Had. (*to Ob.*) Stir, and thou diest.

Mephib. What! ruffian, meanest to murder me?

Had. Hear me, my lord. I know the cause you have
Of discontent: I strained the Prince's words
Something beyond their—

Mephib. Base, perfidious—

Had. Hush!

No matter; you and I best know how far;—
'Twere needless repetition. But I see
Danger within thine eye, and I'll not risk
The safety of the state. You must repose,
I say, beneath good Obil's roof to-night.

Mephib. Villain—

Had. Tut! have a care! in ticklish times
Like these, we wear our daggers here—and mine
Is sometimes sudden.—*Obil,* mark my words.
Provide thy best for Prince Mephibosheth;
Respect him as myself; but if he look
Beyond thy doors, ere the third morning hour,
Your blood be on ye both.—What! hearest thou?

Obil. Master, rev'rently.

Had. Remember! eyes will be about these doors,
To-night, which you were best avoid.—Good rest,
My lord Mephibosheth.

[*Exit. Scene closes.*]

SCENE III.

The gate of the city, looking down the valley toward Enro-gel. Several Jews sitting in the gate. The Warden walking with his truncheon in his hand.

First Jew. Know you what enterprise our Prince intends
After the sacrifice ?

Second Jew. No ; doth he any ?

First Jew. Eliab's son, last night, 'twixt this and Hebron
Met his war chariot and his battle steeds.

Warden. The Prince went forth at dawn this morning, sir,
Upon a mule. His chariot has not passed.

First Jew. But Amariah saw it.

Warden. When ? last night ?

First Jew. Journeying this way, about the second watch,
He heard the clang of hoofs, and drawing close

Beneath some sycamores, beheld the car,
 Horses, and equerries go by, like men
 Who steal upon an enemy. It clashed,
 The place being rough, it clashed, as filled with arms.

Third Jew. But this is strange.

Warden. It did not pass this gate.

Third Jew. Why go about ?

First Jew. Perhaps he meditates
 A swoop upon the restless Edomite.

Second Jew. Look ! who comes there at speed ?

First Jew. See how for life he dashes through the brook,
 And up the hill.—Ha ! look—the animal
 Is spent, and falls—

Second Jew. He stops not—lo ! he comes
 Like the sped arrow. 'Tis some messenger.

Warden. 'Tis Zadok's son. Fall back, and let him pass.

[*Warden calls aloud.*]

What for King David ?

[*Ahimaaz rushes through the gate.*]

Ahim. Tidings ! Close the gates.

[*Passes up into the city.*]

Jews. What can it mean?

Warden. Mischance, I fear.

Jews. Let's after.

[*Exeunt into the city.*]

Warden. His looks were ominous. I'll to the tower
And see if any hostile shape approaches. [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

An apartment in ABSALOM's house. NATHAN and TAMAR.

Nath. Thou'rt left to-day, (would thou wert ever left
Of some that haunt thee !) therefore am I come
To give thee counsel.—Child of sainted Miriam,
Fear not to look upon me ; thou wilt hear
The gentle voice of love, not stern monition.
Commune with me as with a tender parent,
Who cares for all thy wishes, hopes, and fears,
Though prizing thy immortal gem above
The transitory.

Tam. Have I not thus, ever ?

Nath. But I would probe the tenderest of thy heart,
Touch its disease, and give it strength again,
And yet inflict no pain.

Tam. What means my lord ?

Nath. I know thee pure, and guileless as the dove ;
The easier prey ; and thou art fair, to tempt
The spoiler—nay, be not alarmed, but speak
Openly to me. I would ask thee, Princess,
If not displeasing, somewhat of the stranger,
The Syrian who aspires to David's line.

Tam. (*averting her eyes.*)

If I can answer—

Nath. Maiden, need I ask,—
I fear I need not—is he dear to thee ?—
'Tis well. But tell me, hast thou ever noted,
Amidst his many shining qualities,
Aught strange or singular ?—unlike to others ?—
That caused thy wonder ?—even to thyself,
Moved thee to say, How ? wherefore's this ?

Tam. Never.

Nath. Nothing that marked him from the rest of men?—
Hereafter you shall know why thus I question.

Tam. O yes, unlike he seems in many things:
In knowledge, eloquence, high thoughts.

Nath. Proud thoughts
Thou mean'st?

Tam. I'm but a young and simple maid,
But, father, he, of all my ears have judged,
Is master of the loftiest richest mind.

Nath. How have I wronged him; deeming him more apt
For intricate designs, and daring deeds,
Than contemplation's solitary flights.

Tam. Seer, his far-soaring thoughts ascend the stars,
Pierce the unseen abyss, pervade, like light,
The universe, and wing the infinite.

Nath. (*fixing his eyes upon her.*)
What stores of love, and praise, and gratitude,
He thence must bring to Him whose mighty hand
Fashioned their glories, hung yon golden orbs
Amidst his wondrous firmament; who bids

The day-spring know his place, and sheds from all
 Sweet influences ; who bars the haughty sea,
 Binds fast his dreadful hail, but drops the dew
 Nightly upon his People ! How his soul,
 Returning from its quest through Earth and Heaven,
 Must glow with holy fervour !—Doth it, maiden ?

Tam. Ah ! father, father, were it so indeed,
 I were too happy.

Nath. How !—expound thy words.

Tam. Though he has trod the confines of the world,
 Knows all its wonders, and almost has pierced
 The secrets of eternity, his heart
 Is melancholy, lone, discordant, save
 When love attunes it into happiness.
 He hath not found, alas, the peace which dwells
 But with our Fathers' God.

Nath. And canst thou love
 One who loves not Jehovah ?

Tam. O, ask not.

Nath. (*fervently.*)

My child ! thou wouldest not wed an Infidel ?

Tam. (*in tears.*) Oh no ! Oh no !

Nath. Why then this embassage ? Why doth your sire
Still urge the King ? Why hast thou hearkened it ?

Tam. There was a time when I had hopes,—when truth
Seemed dawning in his mind—and sometimes, still,
Such heavenly glimpses shine, that my fond heart
Refuses to forego the hope, at last,
To number him with Israel.

Nath. Beware !
Or thou'l delude thy soul to ruin. Say,
Doth he attend our holy ordinances ?

Tam. He promises observance.

Nath. Two full years
Hath he abode in Jewry.

Tam. Prophet, think
How he was nurtured—in the faith of Idols.—
That impious worship long since he abjured
By his own native strength ; and now he looks
Abroad through Nature's works, and yet must rise—

Nath. Speaks he of Moses ?

Tam. Familiar as thyself.

Nath. I think thou said'st he had surveyed the world ?

Tam. From Ethiopia to the farthest East,
Cities, and tribes, and nations. He can speak
Of hundred-gated Thebes, towered Babylon,
And mightier Nineveh, vast Palibothra,
Serendib anchored by the gates of morning,
Renowned Benares, where the Sages teach
The mystery of the soul, and that famed seat
Where fleets and warriors from Elishah's Isles
Besieged the Beauty, where great Memnon fell :—
Of temples, groves, and superstitious caves
Filled with strange symbols of the Deity ;
Of wondrous mountains, desert-circled seas,
Isles of the ocean, lovely Paradises,
Set, like unfading emeralds, in the deep.

Nath. Yet manhood scarce confirms his cheek.

Tam. All this
His thirst of knowledge has achieved ; the wish
To gather from the wise eternal Truth.

Nath. Not found where he has sought it, and has led
Thy wandering fancy.

Tam. O, might I relate—
But I bethink me, father, of a thing
Like that you asked. Sometimes, when I'm alone,
Just ere his coming, I have heard a sound,
A strange, mysterious, melancholy sound,
Like music in the air. Anon, he enters.

Nath. Ha ! is this oft ?

Tam. 'Tis not unfrequent.

Nath. Only

When thou'rt alone ?

Tam. I have not heard it, else.

Nath. A sound like what ?

Tam. Like wild sad music, father ;
More moving than the lute or viol touched
By skilful fingers. Wailing in the air
It seems around me, and withdraws as when
One looks and lingers for a last adieu.

Nath. Just ere he enters ?

Tam. At his step it dies.

Nath. Mark me.—Thou know'st 'tis held by righteous
men

That Heaven intrusts us all to watching Spirits,⁽⁵⁾
Who ward us from the Tempter.—This I deem
Some intimation of an unseen danger.

Tam. But whence ?

Nath. Time may reveal : meanwhile, I warn thee,
Trust not thyself alone with Hadad.

Tam. Father,—

Nath. I lay not to his charge ; I know, in sooth,
Little of him, (though I have supplicated,)
And will not wound thee with a dark suspicion.
But shun the peril thou art warned of, shun
What looks like danger, though we haply err :
Be not alone with him I charge thee.

Tam. Seer,

I will avoid it.

Nath. All is ominous :
The Oracles are mute, dreams warn no more,
Urim and Thummim keep their glory hid,
My days are dark, my nights are visionless,
Jehovah hath forsaken, or, in wrath,
Resigned us for a season. Times like these

Are jubilee in Hell. Fiends walk the Earth,⁽⁶⁾
Misleading princes, tempting poor men's pillows,
Supplying moody hatred with the dagger,
Lust with occasions, treason with excuses,
Lifting man's heart, like the rebellious waves,
Against his Maker. Watch, and pray, and tremble ;
So may the Highest overshadow thee !

[*Exit Nath.*]

Tam. His awful accents freeze my blood.—Alas ! —
How desolate, how dark my prospect lowers ! —
Oh ! Hadad, is it thus those sunny days,
Those sweet deceptive hopes must terminate,
When mixing in thy gentle looks I saw
Love blend with reverence, as my lips described
The power, the patience, purity, and faith
Of our Almighty Father ? Then, I thought
Thy spirit, softened by its earthly passion,
Meetly refined, and tempered, to receive
The impression of a love which never dies.
How art thou changed ! All tenderness you seemed,
Gentle and social as a playful child ;

But now, in lofty meditation rapt,
As on an icy mountain-top thou sit'st
Lonely and unapproachable, or tossest
Upon the surge of passion, like the wreck
Of some proud Tyrian in the stormy sea.—
What sounds are those !—A tumult !—'Tis the cry
And rush of multitudes—Bagoas ! Ho !—

Enter BAGOAS.

What noise is that ?

Bag. 'Tis nothing, Princess.

Tam. Hark !—

The clamour rises !—Shrieks, and frantic voices !
Lead to the balcony—'tis some strange chance.—
Proceed, I say.

Bag. Most honoured Princess——

Tam. Ha !—

Dar'st thou oppose me ?

Bag. Strict commands were left
Thou shouldst not go abroad, nor look without,
Until my lord's return.

Tam. (*aside.*) What can this mean?—
My father, slave, commanded so?

Bag. Sternly;
With threats for disobedience.

Tam. 'Tis well:
Begone, and shut the doors.—Begone I say.

[*Exit Bag.*]

I'll know the meaning of this dreadful outcry.

[*Exit hastily by another door.*]

Enter BAGOAS, alarmed.

Bag. Gods! I forgot the roof. (*Pursues her.*)

SCENE V.

*The roof of ABSALOM's house. Enter TAMAR, hastening
to the parapet.*

Tam. Good heavens!—what dire disaster!—whence this
throng
Of frantic women—children—ancient men
Tearing their beards and garments—Ha! the Ark!—

Abiathar and Zadok weeping by it—
 The Priests and Levites—Gracious God ! some foe
 Hath sure surprised us !—Hear me !—People !—Friends !

Enter BAGOAS.

Bag. (taking hold of her.)
 Come, lady—
Tam. Horror ! there's the King—
 Barefoot—amidst his weeping household—
Bag. No, no—
Tam. His gray head bare—his mantle rent!—O, hear me!
 [Stretching her hands to the people below.]
 Look up !—O, answer me !—My father David !—
Bag. (drawing her away.) Cry not, but listen—
Tam. (breaking from him, rushes to the parapet.)
 Ho ! hear me !—Levites !—Friends !—Will no one answer ?
Bag. I'll answer, lady : call not to the people.
Tam. (wildly.)
 What has befallen him ?—wherefore's the tumult?
Bag. Your grandsire is no longer King.

Tam. Alas !

Is Zion taken ?

Bag. Not by foes.—The Prince

Your father wears, to-day, the Hebrew crown.

Tam. (*thunderstruck.*) My father !

Bag. Surely Princess ;—look not pale.

Tam. (*gasping for breath.*) My father—my—

Bag. By all the gods 'tis true—may wrath o'ertake me
If I deceive you—crown'd this day at Hebron.

What say'st ?—thy white lips move—

Tam. (*with a deep groan.*)

Oh ! Absalom—Oh ! Absalom ! (*Falls senseless.*)

A C T IV.

SCENE I. *The top of Mount Olivet, crowded with fugitives from Jerusalem: KING DAVID, surrounded by his household, worshipping: The Cherethites and Pelethites* restrain the People from pressing upon him. JOAB, BENAIAH, and other armed Chiefs, marshalling the multitude.*

Ben. Go bid yon loiterers hasten over Kedron,
If they would march with us.

Joab. Let them abide :—
Why crawl they after us ?—What seest thou, ho ?

* The Cherethites and Pelethites, or the Extirpators and the Expeditious, were the King's military attendants, and the immediate agents of his will.

[Addressing a Soldier stationed in a tree above him.]

Soldier. Nothing, my lord, but people from the city
Hurrying this way.

Joab. Look not on them, fool: fix
Thine eyes upon the south.

Soldier. I do, my lord.

Joab. What seest thou toward the Prince's pillar?

Soldier. Nothing.

Joab. On that same open height beyond it?

Soldier. Nothing.

Joab. Well, nail thine eyes there.—Will the old man's
prayer

Stretch out till doom? Benaiah, we lose time;
We should be now beyond Bahurim.

Ben. Be patient;
The stroke was bitter, and his heart seemed fraught
Almost to bursting.

Joab. Better rive at once,
Than meet the tender mercies of his son
By loitering here. By heaven, I'll rouse him—

Ben. Hold,
Hold, Joab!

People. Stand aside—Back there—The King!

[*KING DAVID comes forward among the People: Enter HUSHAI, with his garments rent; he falls to the ground, and clasps the King's feet.]*

Hush. God save my lord the King! Live I to see
My master thus! the Light, the Rock of Israel!

K. Dav. Once, Hushai, once the candle of the Lord
Beamed on my head, and like a shadowing rock,
His buckler sheltered me. Thou seest me, now,
Dark and defenceless; all my leprous sins
Wrathfully visited upon my people.

First People. What will become of us?

Second People. Alas! alas!

Heaven hath forsaken us!

Third People. Wo, wo, alas!

Joab. (*going among them.*)

Peace with your howling! Peace! or ye shall feast
The wild beasts of the wilderness.—My lord,
We linger here while death is at our heels.

K. Dav. Hushai.

Hush. Command thy servant.

K. Dav. Turn thou back :
Mix with his council : seem as they. Thy words
May blast Ahithophel's, whose malice, else,
Will work our ruin : With us thou canst nought.—
Abiathar and Zadok stay behind,
By my commandment, with the Ark : To them
Communicate what thou canst learn of import :
They will despatch it to me by their sons,
Where I shall wait them in the wilderness.

Joab. Depart ere thou art seen.
Hush. God guard the King,
And bring him home to Zion.

K. Dav. May it please Him !

[*Exit Hushai.*]

Soldier. (*calling from the tree.*)
Joab—my lord—I see the flash of arms
On that same hill :—The vanguard comes—and now
The horsemen.—

Joab. Make they for the city ?

Soldier. Straight.

Joab. Enough ; descend.—Shall we advance ?

K. Dav. Is there conveyance for the household?

Joab. None.

People. Yes, Ziba's here with asses.

Second People. Only two.

Joab. (*impatiently.*)

Therefore, my lord, behoves us haste : Suppose
His Horse o'ertake us in the open plain,
Cumber'd with women ?

K. Dav. Bid the Pelethites
Take up the youngest. Place upon the beasts
Michal and Bathsheba. Send forward some
For mules and camels, if the villages,
Or fields can yield us any.—Where's the Prophet ?

Joab. Yonder, with Solomon.—Art ready, sir ?

K. Dav. Ittai, protect the rearward. Station one
To bring intelligence.—Command the signal.

Joab. (*to his trumpeter.*) Sound.

[*Trumpet sounds : exeunt the King, and People,*
guarded by the armed bands.]

SCENE II.

The palace : an antechamber of the council-hall : Officers of ABSALOM's guard, attendants, &c. in waiting.

First Off. Will their debate ne'er end ?

Second Off. No, by the proverb,
Never : when gossip graybeards talk, the sun
Stands still.

Enter HADAD from the hall.

Had. (*to one of the attendants.*)

What, is she come yet ?

Attend. No, my lord.

Had. (*aside.*) This is Heaven's spite !—
You bore the signet ?—saw the Princess ?

Attend. Yes, my lord.

Had. Why didst thou not stay by her when thou saw'st
The streets in tumult ?

Attend. I was bid depart.

Had. O curse !—(*Turns angrily into the hall.*)

First Off. What clouds the Syrian ? What's amiss, (*to
the Attendant.*)

That Hadad bites his lip with such a frown ?

Attend. The Princess, sir, is missing.

Officers. Missing ! Ha ! (*They gather round him.*)

But how ?

Attend. It happened thus. Imploring leave
To come unto her father, he despatched
Permission by his signet ; but she came not,
Though she had thrice entreated him with tears.
It since appears, refusing all attendance,
Except a slave, she went into the streets,
And has not since been heard of.

First Off. When was this ?

Attend. About the hour of twilight.

First Off. 'Tis dark night : (*Looking out.*)

The city's in confusion : she may suffer
Some shameful outrage.

Attend. That is feared indeed :

Bagoas raves, and tears his hair, and Hadad—

Re-enter HADAD.

Had. Brave gallants of the guard, the King commands
You follow me. The Princess Tamar's lost,
This riotous night, we fear, amidst the streets.
Ride six of you, for life, to every gate,
And bid them, in the King's name, suffer none
Pass outward :—Scatter through the streets your comrades ;
Pierce sharply through the people ;—scan the crowds.—
If ye espy her, send me instant news
To Zion gate by Gihon. On the bridge
'Twixt the two cities I will post myself.

Away ! [*Exeunt officers of the Guard.*]

(*To one of the attendants.*)

—Come hither. Know'st thou that dark alley
Behind the Market-place ?

Attend. I do, my lord.

Had. Run thither. Near a lattice thou wilt see

A low dark man, in a Scribe's gaberdine,
 Devoutly searching Moses, by a lamp
 Nich'd in the wall. Say Hadad's treasure's lost—
 The Princess—lost in the unruly streets,
 And spirited, perhaps, into some den
 Of mischief. Bid him search, and come to me
 Upon the western bridge o'er Gihon. Fly. [*Exit Attend.*]
 Go all :—disperse yourselves in every quarter :—
 If ye hear tidings, bring them me.—Stay thou,
 The King's forthcoming.—He shall be enriched,
 Who first salutes me with intelligence.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The council-hall. ABSALOM, AHITHOPHEL, MANASSES, MALCHIAH, HUSHAI, and others, in debate: AHITHOPHEL speaking.

Ahith. My lord, you know them not—you wear, to-day,
 The diadem, and hear yourself proclaimed

With trump and timbrel Israel's joy, and deem
Your lasting throne established. Canst thou bless,
Or blast, like Him who rent the waters, clave
The rock, whose awful clangour shook the world
When Sinai quaked beneath his majesty ?
Yet Jacob's seed forsook this thundering Guide,
Even at the foot of the astonished mount!—
If benefits could bind them, wherefore flames
The Ammonitish spoil upon thy brows,
While David's locks are naked to the night dew ?
Canst thou transcend thy father? is thy arm
Stronger than his who smote from sea to sea,
And girt us like a band of adamant?—
Trust not their faith. Thy father's root is deep :
His stock will bourgeon with a single sun ;
And many tears will flow to moisten him.—
Pursue, this night, or ruin will o'ertake thee.

Ab. What say'st thou, Hushai ? Speak to this, once more.

Hush. I listen to my lord Ahithophel,
As to a heaven-instructed oracle ;
But what he urges more alarms my fears.

Thou seest, O King, how night envelopes us :
Amidst its perils, whom must we pursue ?
The son of Jesse is a man of war,
Old in the field, hardened to danger, skilled
In every wile and stratagem ; the night
More welcome than the day. Each mountain path
He treads instinctive as the ibex ; sleeps,
Moistened with cold dank drippings of the rock,
As underneath the canopy. Some den
Will be his bed to-night. No hunter knows
Like him, the caverns, cliffs, and treacherous passes ;
Familiar to his feet, in former days,
As 'twixt the Court and Tabernacle ! What !
Know ye not how his great heart swells in danger
Like the old lion's from his lair by Jordan
Rising against the strong ? Beware of him by night,
While anger chafes him. Never hope
Surprisal. While we talk, they lurk in ambush,
Expectant of their prey : the Cherethites,
And those blood-thirsty Gittites crouch around him,
Like evening wolves : fierce Joab darts his eyes,

Keen as the leopard's, out into the night,
And curses our delay ; Abishai raves ;
Benaiah, Ittai, and the Tachmonite,
And they, the mighty three, who broke the host
Of the Philistines, and from Bethlehem well
Drew water, when the King but thirsted, now,
Raven like beasts bereaved of their young.—
We go not after boys, but the Gibborim,
Whose bloody weapons never struck but triumphed.

Malchi. It were a doubtful quest.

Hush. Hear me, O King.

Go not to night, but summon, with the dawn,
Israel's ten thousands ; mount thy conquering car,
Surrounded by innumerable hosts,
And go, their strength, their glory, and their King,
Almighty to the battle ; for what might
Can then resist thee ? Light upon this handful,
Like dew upon the earth ; or if they bar
Some city's gates against thee, let the people
Level its puny ramparts, stone by stone,
And cast them into Jordan. Thus, my lord

May bind his crown with wreaths of victory,
And owe his kingdom to no second arm.

Ahith. O blindness ! lunacy !

Hush. I would retire ;
Ye have my counsel.

Ahith. Would thou hadst not come,
To linger out with thy pernicious talk
The hours of action.

Hush. Wise Ahithophel,
No longer I'll offend thee. Please the King——

[*ABSALOM waves him to resume his seat.*]

Ahith. By all your hopes, my lord, of life and glory,
I do adjure thee shut thine ears to him !
His counsel's fatal, if not treacherous.
I see its issue, clearly as I see
The badge of royalty,—not long to sit
Where now it sparkles, if his words entice thee.—
Never was prudence in my tongue, or now.—
Blanch'd as I am, weak, withered, winter-stricken,
Grant but twelve thousand men, and I'll go forth.
Weary, weak-handed, what can they, if taken,
Now, in their first alarm ?

Ab. Were this resolved,
We would not task thy age. What think ye, sirs ?

Manass. My lord, the risk is great : a night assault
Deprives us of advantage from our numbers,
Which in the open field ensure success ;
And news of a disaster blown about,
And magnified, just now, when all are trembling,
Might lose a Tribe, might wound us fatally.
Hushai's advice appears most prudent.

Ahith. Fate !

Malchi. I think so too, my lord.

Others. And I. And I.

Ahith. Undone !

Ab. The Council are agreed, this once,
Against you, and with them the King accords.

Ahith. (*stretching his hands toward ABSALOM.*)
Against thyself, thy throne, thy life, thy all !
Darkness has entered thee, confusion waits thee,
Death brandishes his dart at thee, and grins
At thy brief diadem !—Farewell ! Farewell !—
Remember me !—I'll not be checked and rated,—

Branded with treason—see my hoary hairs
Hooted and scoffed at, if they're spared, indeed,
For such indignity.—Thou'l follow soon. [Exit.]

Ab. Or win or lose, we walk not by thy light.

Malchi. The old man's strangely moved.

Manass. His fury seemed
Prophetical.

Ab. The council is dissolved,
Here to assemble in the morning early,
To order for our absence. Leave us now
To private business.

Counsellors. Save our lord the King.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

The bridge over Gihon by the corner of Millo, between the upper and lower city : illuminations seen on the housetops : sounds of nocturnal riot and confusion in the streets : HADAD walking impatiently backwards and forwards on the bridge.

Had. Where can they loiter ? Should some ruffian clasp
Her peerless beauty—Ha ! what cry is that ?

[*Listens anxiously to distant shouts.*]

Mouth'd brutes!—Or live, or die King Absalom,
I care not.—How like Hell's epitome
The city looks ! The fires of jubilee
Flash bloodily upon the gloomy clouds
That hang, as charged with thunder, over it.
The crowds upon the housetops stare about

Like new come ghosts. In every guarded tower
 Helms gleam, and bristling spears ; and crested forms
 Stalking the ramparts in the lurid light,
 Like guardians on the Infernal battlements,
 Appear gigantic. But, were those grim confines
 Peopled—polluted—with a herd like these,
 These Chosen Children, they were Hell indeed !
 The filth, the dregs of all Jerusalem
 Float in the streets. Thieves, beggars, bravoes, base
 Nethinims, harlots, tattered prodigals,
 Flock from their holes to shout for Absalom.
 Almost, I pity——Hark ! a rabblement
 Hoots this way. Let me shun their drunken madness.

[Retires into the shade of Millo : enter a crowd from
 the lower city, shouting.]

First Crowd. Hurrah for Absalom ! King Absalom !

Second Crowd. Down with the Graybeard !

Third Crowd. Down with the Giant-queller

Fourth Crowd. Hold, sirs—hold while I chant a canticle
 Indited for next Feast of Tabernacles,
 On that same doughty feat.

Fifth Crowd. (*drunk.*) A murrain take
Your canticles! Cry, Long live Absalom!

Fourth Crowd. Whom have we there, my masters?—See
ye not?

Bolt upright by the wall?—Rabbi, who art thou?
Emerge, I say:—come from the land of shadows:
Art thou for Absalom?

Had. Ay.

Fifth Crowd. Then come forth.

Had. I'm stationed by the King.

Crowd. Molest him not;

He says he's of our party.

Fifth Crowd. Let him shout. (*Approaches Hadad.*)
Uplift thy voice. Wast thou born dumb?

Crowd. Look! look!

What throng is that by David's Tower?

Second Crowd. Hurrah! (*Rushes up toward Zion: all follow.*)

Had. (*resuming his station on the bridge.*)

What nightmare sits on them! They might have groped
The Red Sea caves, the womb of Caucasus,

The den of Hiddekel—Ha! Maugrabin!

[MAUGRABIN looks from behind an angle of the neighbouring wall, and enters.]

What news? hast found her? ha?

Maug. No track of her.

Had. Out, Incubus!

Where hast thou idled? Darest thou torture me?

Maug. By Trismegistus! in this half short hour
I've borne my clay so sprightly about,
That eyes which saw me doubted if they saw
Substance, or shadow. Every den of blood,
Cavern of booty, loose retreat of lust
And murder, compassed by these holy walls,
I've entered, searched, and sworn by Samaël,
That if they touch a hair of her, their souls
Shall blaze, this night, in the profoundest Hell.

Why should I play thee false? Grudge I the morsel?
Or am I like to hide, for virtue's sake,
A delicate bird of David's nest from thee,
The King of Fowlers?

Had. (continuing a moment in thought.) Follow me.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

The court of the Tabernacle on Mount Zion, lighted by a fire upon the altar of burnt offerings : the interior of the sanc- tum partially visible through the smoke of the incense burning there : ZADOK and ABIATHAR standing by the altar.

Abi. The night frowns darkly, and may burst in storm
Before our sons o'ertake the King. How, then,
Cross ruffled Jordan with the helpless household ?

Zad. Look not to me for cheering. Am not I
Dark as thyself ?

Abi. But thou didst charge the youths
So straitly to pass o'er.

Zad. So Hushai bade.

Enter TAMAR, attended by two ancient Jews.

Tam. O, holy Priests ! O, blessed Tabernacle !
Zadok—Abiathar—will ye protect me ?

Zad. (*supporting her.*)

Protect thee, Princess !—thou art with sure friends.

Whence comest thou ?

Tam. I know not—Oh ! I know not.

Jew. We rescued her from villains.

Zad. Merciful !

What measure hath this dreadful day of wrath !

Jew. We met her in a dark and lonely place,
 West of Damascus' gate, dragged by two ruffians,
 Her mouth close bound. Perceiving us approach,
 They snatched the caul and circlet from her head,
 Tore from her arms and neck the costly gems,
 And plunged into the darkness.

Zad. Blest be He

Whose mercy guided you !—How cam'st thou thus
 Exposed ?—Know ye ? (*to the Jews.*)

Jew. Hearing the Ark returned,
 She bent her steps this way, to seek of you
 Intelligence and comfort. In the dusk

And crowded streets, losing her sole attendant,
And borne amidst the tumult, she was seized
By those same wretches, her pretended guides.

Zad. Ye've saved the Princess Tamar. Let me know
Your worthy names.

Jew. Barak and Mahlon, kinsmen,
Of Omri's house.

Zad. The deed shall be rewarded,
If righteousness return. But leave the maid—
We watch before the altar—safer here,
In presence of the Lord, than with an host.

Tam. Yes, leave me, leave me, friends.
Jew. Farewell! may prayers
And sacrifice avert the threatened judgments.

[*Exeunt Jews.*]

Tam. O, tell me, where is David?—I beheld him
Barefoot and weeping—Or was that a dream?—
Yourselves—the Levites—weeping round the Ark?

Zad. Ah! that it were a dream!
Tam. But speak to me
Plainly of things, for I grow wild. I ask,

But no one answers—Absalom is King
 They cry—When ? How ?—What hath befallen us ?

Zad. David is driven forth.

Tam. Where ? where ?

Abi. We know not.

Zad. Nor where, nor how : it fell upon our heads
 Like sudden thunder.

Tam. Were I but with him !—

Ye know not where he went ? Perhaps they followed—
 Have murdered him ?—Assure me—Doth he live ?

[*The Priests whisper together.*]

Enough ! my father is not !

Zad. Hearken, Princess,
 For we may trust thee. David lives. He fled
 Toward Jordan, promising to wait for tidings
 In a concerted place—

Tam. But will he 'scape ?

Zad. If he pass o'er to night ; and both our sons
 Are sped to warn him.

Tam. Did ye urge ?—implore him ?

Abi. We counselled him, and he is wise of heart.

Zad. Calm your perturbed spirits now : repose
Upon the Lord. His promises sustain
Our fainting hopes: His sacred presence dwells
Still in the Sanctuary, and forbids
Despair. Yes, when the Ark resumed its place,
The Glory settled 'twixt the Cherubim
With undiminished lustre.

Tam. Then, there's hope—
But Oh!—my guilty father!—wo alas! (*weeps bitterly.*)

Zad. Despair not : join with us in supplications.
Tam. Why did they spare me ! Oh, that I had died
When death was near !

Zad. Disparage not thy rescuer ;
Jehovah hears thee.—Kneel for his offences,
For Israel's, whose portentous sins may tempt
A retribution terrible and final.
Enter the Sanctuary, and uplift
Thy sorrowing heart, more prevalent than incense.

[*They lead her into the Tabernacle.*]

SCENE VI.

*Without the veil of the court : HADAD attended by several of
ABSALOM's guard : MAUGRABIN, at a little distance in the
gloom, watching them.*

Had. I saw her there : she entered with the Priests.
Go in, and say the King commands her presence.

[*The Guards pass into the court of the Tabernacle :
HADAD remains, intently looking through the veil.]*

Lo ! lo !—the bloody shrine of sacrifice,—
The cherub-tissued curtains,—the seven branches,
Revealing through the censer's smothering fume
The dim magnificence !—Each implement
As he prescribed.—These must be symbols, types
Of things hereafter.

Maug. (*muttering to himself.*) Tempt him, if thou wilt—
Pry in his secrets till devouring fire

Break out upon thee—Yea, within the snuff
Of that detested incense!—How the wreaths
Begin to curl about him!—I'll not risk
Annihilation. (*Exit.*)

Had. Wherefore should I tremble?—
Mortals have gazed unblinded—Moses saw
The lightning of his glory pass.—But I—
How could I front the terrible array
If yonder vail should part—One flash might end me!—
What holds them parleying? This abhorred smoke
Is worse than Stygian—every breath I draw
Is mortal agony.—Leave her I will not
In custody of those arch hypocrites—

[*Re-enter Guards, with TAMAR.*]

Mean ye to stay eternity?

First Guard. We stayed not.

Had. Peace!

Second Guard. (*aside to his comrade.*)

Look how convulsed and pale he is;
And see, his breast is bloody.

Had. (*fiercely.*) Get behind me.

[*Throws his mantle across his breast, and conducts TAMAR out, followed by the rest: she neither speaks, nor regards him.*]

SCENE VII.

A deep, woody glen: KING DAVID's followers scattered in different parts, some sleeping on the ground, others stationed with their arms watching: The royal household sheltered under a slight tent spread beneath a tree: a fire burning near them: ITTAI and BENAIAH standing together in discourse.

Itt. It moves me more to see his hoary head
Thus bowed and bare, to read his grief-struck eye,
Than were his corse here bleeding. That's an end
Of good and evil. All his faults twice summed,
Deserve not this. My hardy spearmen wept,
When he, the second time, besought me turn,
Nor link my fortunes to a fallen Master.

Ben. I cannot talk these things : I know the King.

Itt. I, too, have stood by him in sharp extremes,
But never did his nature shine to me,
So like the furnaced gold. 'Tis strange, Benaiah,
The canker gnawing at his inmost heart,
He should sustain himself ; careful for us
As he were bosom-free. The Prophet droops
Almost to death. Look how he sits beside
The fire ; his large eye fixed, like one distraught.
Even youthful Solomon essays to cheer him.

Ben. He was God's herald, Ittai ; but the Lord
Communes with him no more. 'Tis that o'erwhelms him.
This horrible rebellion came unwarned.
Besides, his reverend years are all unused
To these rough accidents.

Itt. Outnumbers he
The King in years ?

Ben. I know not ; but the King
Shook hands with toil and danger, in his youth,
And never parted. Oft, while jealous Saul
Laid snares for him, we harboured in these wilds ;

Slept under branching trees, or in a cave,
Huddled like outlaws round the blazing brands,
Partook our meal. Reclined among us—
I see him now——his consecrated locks
Clustering in youthful beauty, and his lips
Dispensing grace and wisdom not unmeet
For mitred Aaron ; sometimes mixed with sounds
Drawn from his harp, and heard in desert woods,
From one so young, so constant, so oppressed—
It touched the most obdurate. In worst want,
His gracious speech, and modest-beaming eye
More cheered us than the wine cup.

Enter JOAB.

Joab. How now, sirs !
No tidings yet, and past the second watch.

Itt. Some accident hath stayed them, or the rebels
Waver in council.

Joab. God confound them worse
Than gabbling Babel !—Is the King this way ?

Ben. He passed among the trees upon the left.

Joab. 'Twere well to wake the People : the first news
May reach us from the trumpet. Should a blast
Bellowing among these gorges rouse them—Ho, there !—

[*Exit on the left.*]

Ben. No fear : four scouts on speedy dromedaries
Watch toward Jerusalem, who will apprise us.
But see, the King approaches, as in thought.

[*They remove to another quarter.*]

Enter KING DAVID.

K. Dav. 'Tis not my honour, crown, nor life—nor all
That may oppress me—scorn, nor poverty—
Have I not suffered these, yet been at peace ?
Tranquil upon a bed of flint ? looked up
Sweetly upon thy firmament, when nought
But the resplendent stars were over me,
Revolving all thy wondrous goodness, power,
And promises, till brighter heralds spake
Of thee in the rejoicing east?—But ah!

Temptation found me—and the angry Judge
 Hath found me too! I slighted thee, my King,
 My Father, and thy righteousness returns
 The insufferable pang. Thou only know'st,
 Thou only know'st—O, spare the penitent!
 Nor yet destroy the guilty utterly;
 Humble, but not destroy my erring son!

Enter NATHAN and SOLOMON.

Sol. Look, father, how the Prophet faints. He deems
 Us quite abandoned, and is past all hope
 Ever to tread the holy hill again.

K. Dav. Despair not, Seer. Why dost thou not refresh
 Thy weariness with food? Thy spirit fails
 From toil and hunger. Feed, and thou'l't revive.

Nath. O, that my thirsty soul could find, once more,
 The fountains that refresh from His right hand!

K. Dav. But dost thou well impatiently to grieve
 His transient hiding? 'Tis not thy offence
 Whose chastisement is on us. Thou wilt know

His gracious visitations, hear his voice
On thy instructed bed, and wake to bless
His mercy, with the sun ; while I, perhaps,
Am slumbering where no radiant planet beams
To cheer the chambers where his presence comes not.

Nath. 'Tis all a gloomy formless void. I fear
Even for the Covenant. His word must stand ;
Yet he hath cast the sceptre to the ground,
And left that Son of Wickedness to triumph,⁽⁷⁾
He swore should not afflict thee. Yea, thy throne
Was promised lasting as the days of Heaven,
And as the sun before him. Where is it ?—
And where the Chosen People, if in thee,
And thy offence, the promise fail ?

K. Dav. Not so.

Behold this child, whom God hath ever loved ;
Him thou shalt nurture, and restore to Israel
When the oppression's past. Adopt him now.
And if I perish, Boy, honour and love
The Prophet as thy father : he will teach
The paths of wisdom, guide thee to a crown

Whose brightness will outlast the rock of Zion.

—Dost thou attend me?

Sol. O, sir, most heedfully. But, sure, the Lord
Will never prosper wicked Absalom.

K. Dav. How that may be, we know not, but be sure
His gracious promises, almighty works,
His oath to Abraham, pact with Moses, all
His patience, testimonies, chastisements,
His signs, his oracles, his graven Law,
The trampled Heathen, the triumphant Ark,
The promised Temple, the all-glorious hope
Of Jacob's bright redeeming Star—these, these,
Will never be abortive, though my staff
Of stewardship be broken, and my eyes
See not the Lord's salvation.

Sol. Father, look!
Ahimaaz and Jonathan are come.

*Enter JOAB, BENAIAH, ITTAI, and other Captains, followed
by a crowd of people, with AHIMAAZ and JONATHAN, who
prostrate themselves before K. DAVID.*

Ahim. } God save the King!
Jon. }

K. Dav. Declare your tidings.

Ahim. Would

They were more welcome ! Absalom controls
 The city, and was locked in deep debate,
 When we departed, whether to pursue.—
 The council differed.—Hushai prays the King
 Cross Jordan speedily,—by no means linger.

K. Dav. 'Twas in debate you say.

Ahim. Even when we came :
 Ahithophel enjoining on the Prince
 Instant pursuit, but Hushai for delay.

K. Dav. You saw not Hushai ?

Ahim. No, my lord ; we staid
 Beside Enrogel, fearing to go in :
 My father sent a maid to us.

K. Dav. When left ye ?

Jon. About the dewfall.

K. Dav. Wherefore have ye tarried ?

Ahim. We were pursued, my lord, and had not 'scaped,

At last, but for a woman of Bahurim,
Who hid us in a well.

K. Dav. Captains, ye hear.—
Joab—Benaiah—order for the march.

[*Exeunt JOAB and BENAIAH.*]

What further of the city? Shed they blood?

Ahim. We heard of none.

K. Dav. No violence committed?

Jon. None, my lord.

His partisans possess the gates and walls
With warlike semblance, but the noise within
Resembled riotous mirth.

K. Dav. No outrage then?

Ahim. None—on the people.

K. Dav. How! ye falter. Young men,
Keep nothing back, I charge ye, good or evil.

Ahim. Somewhat more proper for your private ear
We must relate then.

K. Dav. (*to the people.*) Go; prepare ye all
To march.—Come this way, good Ahimaaz.

[*Exeunt.*]

A C T V.

SCENE I. MAHANAIM, *near the principal gate of the city.*

The People collected: supplies of all kinds entering. King DAVID standing among his Captains upon the wall, by the ascent of the gate.

First Citizen. But will the battle be to-day ?

Second Cit. You see,

The Captains are arrayed in proof; the bands

In readiness, awaiting but the King.

First Cit. Where lies the foe ?

Second Cit. Hard by the wood of Ephraim.⁽⁸⁾

Enter an Old Man.

Old Man. Direct mine eyes—where is he? which is he?

Third Cit. Whom seek'st thou?

Old Man. The Anointed—the Sweet Singer.

Third Cit. The King? Behold him yonder, on the wall,
Midst the Gibborim.—Seest thou not?—there, father,
Him in the robe.

Old Man. Is that the King?—Oh, heavens!

First Cit. Why dost thou weep?

Old Man. How matted all his beard!—

Ah! how neglected!—how his reverend locks
Are scattered!—Heavens! is this the man who shone
Even as an Angel of the Lord?—How changed
Since I beheld him by the Tabernacle!

Second Cit. He hath not trimmed his beard, nor changed
his raiment,

Nor slept, since he forsook Jerusalem.

Old. Man. Are those the Captains?—What helm'd chief
is that,

Whose face is as the ravening eagle's beak?

Second Cit. 'Tis Joab.

Old. Man. Blest be Joab! hearts of flint,
And hands of steel, are needful now.

Second Cit. See, see !

[*KING DAVID and the Captains descend into the gate :*

The People press nearer.]

K. Dav. Bring forth my harness.—*Joab and Abishai,*
Lead ye the vanguard by the southern gate,
And wait me in the plain.—My spear and harness !

People. (*many voices.*) O, go not forth, my lord—O, go
not—Go not !

Joab. If I might speak ?

K. Dav. Say on.

Joab. Thou know'st the time
Is perilous, and we can jeopard nothing.
Behold, my lord,—this city's strong for siege,
High-towered, and watered, plentiful in corn
Poured in by Gilead, provender, and kine.
Let us thy servants strike the battle now,
And if we fail, my lord shall succour us
From out the city, or receive us here
Where we can baffle them. But if my lord
The King go forth and meet mischance to-day,
What hope is left us ?

People. (*crying tumultuously.*) No, no, no,—The King Shall not go forth—No matter if we perish— Ten thousand of us, to the King, is nought— They care not for us—If the King be slain, Israel is lost—My lord shall not go forth—

Joab. You hear the People.

Itt. All thy servants pray.

K. Dav. Well, what ye think is best, be done.

Joab. (*unsheathing his sword.*) Advance The banner.

K. Dav. Hear me, Joab—Ittai, hear— Ye sons of Zeruiah, mark my charge In presence of the People!—For my sake, Deal gently with him—even Absalom— Touch not his life—What! is he not my blood?

Joab. God save the King!—Abishai pass thou south; I issue by this portal.

K. Dav. Ittai.

Itt. My lord.

[*They retire from the hearing of the People.*]

K. Dav. (*after a moment's pause.*)]

'Thou hast a son?

Itt. Two valiant sons, my lord.

K. Dav. Fear'st thou the living God ?

Itt. Thy servant doth.

K. Dav. Thou know'st, then, what it were to lose thy son—
O, think on this—If he be taken captive,—

And he is ever in the press of combat,
Known by his deeds and stature,—shield his life
From their wild fury. You perceive their minds
Are greatly edged, and all will aim at him.—
I would yield crown and life, ere see my son
Hurried to his award—Dire, dire for him
Is this arbitrement—

Itt. Wet not your cheeks,
My gracious lord, it doth unman my heart,
Which I would wear, to-day, like my habergeon.

K. Dav. Then swear to me.

Itt. I swear.

K. Dav. Enough, enough.

[*The King resumes his station in the gate : The squadrons pass out before him.*]

SCENE. II.

*The tent of ABSALOM : ABSALOM, armed except his helmet,
and HADAD.*

Ab. Methought I stood again, at dead of night,
In that rich sepulchre, viewing, alone,
The wonders of the place. My wandering eyes
Resting upon the costly sarcophagus
Reared in the midst, I saw therein a form
Like David ; not as he appears, but young,
And ruddy. In his lovely-tinctured cheek
The vermil blood looked pure and fresh as life
In gentle slumber. On his blooming brow
Was bound the diadem. But, while I gazed,
The phantasm vanished, and my father lay there,
As he is now, his head and beard in silver,
Sealed with the pale fixed impress of the tomb.

I knelt, and wept. But when I thought to kiss
My tears from off his reverend cheek, a voice
Cried, Impious! hold!—and suddenly there stood
A dreadful and resplendent form before me,
Bearing the Tables of the Law.

Had. Rare phantoms!

Ab. It spake not, moved not, but still sternly pointed
To one command, which shone so fiercely bright
It seared mine eyeballs. Presently, I seemed
Transported to the desolate wild shore
Of Asphaltites, night, and storm, and fire,
Astounding me with horror. All alone
I wandered ; but where'er I turned my eyes,
On the bleak rocks, or pitchy clouds, or closed them,
Flamed that command.

Had. How o'erwrought fancy coins!

Ab. Then suddenly I sunk down, down, methought,
Ten thousand thousand cubits to a wide
And travelled way, walled to the firmament
On either side, and filled with hurrying nations ;
Hurrying they seemed, or hurried by some spell,

Toward a portentous adamantine gate
Towering before us to the empyrean.
Beside it Abraham sat, in reverend years
And gracious majesty, snatching his Seed
From its devouring jaws. When I approached,
He groaned forth, Parricide! and stretched no aid—
To me alone, of all his Children. Then,
What flames, what howling fiery billows caught me,
Like the red ocean of consuming cities,
And shapes most horrid ; all, methought, in crowns
Scorching as molten brass, and every eye
Bloodshot with agony, yet none had power
To tear them off. With frantic yells of joy,
They crowned me too, and with the pang, I woke.

Had. 'Twas time, indeed. But this is empty nothing,
And should not shake a constant mind.

Ab. Not shake

From its determined purpose ; but may move
Affection, memory, with images
Of things, loved, mourned, or feared. That heart, methinks,
Were of strange mould which kept no cherished print

Of earlier, happier times, when life was fresh,
And love and innocence made holy-day
Within the bosom, destined soon to know
The jar of sterner inmates ; or, that owned
No transient sadness, when a dream, or glimpse
Of fancy touched past joys.

Had. I held your soul
Fixed with a gaze too steadfast on the sun
Of glory, e'er to cast such looks behind.

Ab. And, Hadad, I had thought it strange in thee,
But that thou never knew'st a parent's love,
To hold so lightly what has cost me more
To quell, than all I can confront in arms.
Were I unmoved by such exhaustless bounty,
Heaped, loaded on me, since my earliest thought,
Till traitors poisoned him, I were a Fiend.

Enter an Officer of the Guard.

Off. My lord, the scouts bring tidings of the foe,
Skirting the left hand wood.

Ab. What form of march,
What numbers show they, sir ?

Off. Three squadrons come.—
Joab, Benaiah, and the Cherethites,
Known by their scarlet plumage, make the vaward,
Beneath the royal banner : In the next,
The white scarfs of the Gittite troop appear :
The third was too remote for ken.

Ab. What numbers ?

Off. Some third, or fourth of ours, my lord.

Ab. So bold ?

Yet that I looked for ; well I know their temper.
Saw they—the King my father ?

Off. No, my lord,
No port that did resemble him.

Ab. 'Tis well :
Command my chariot to the tent : Go, bid
The Captain be at his pavilion straightway. (*Exit Off.*)
This stern defiance arms my soul again.
So David front me not, these carrion birds,
So fond to gorge, and baited to the carnage,

Shall taste their fill, to-day, by Astaroth!

Now for my daughter—Tamar ! ho !

[*Partly withdrawing the inner curtain of the tent.*]

Enter TAMAR.

—My child,

Since thou wouldest follow, I have ordered thus.—

The battle being near—

Tam. O ! say not so—

Ab. Peace! hear me.

Tam. Father ! father ! on my knees

I do conjure thee—

Ab. (*sternly.*) Tamar !

Tam. By the love

You bear me ! by my grandsire's age ! by all

Heaven's fearful threatenings—

Ab. Hush ! no more of this !

Know'st thou thy father?—Hope as soon to quail

My rushing war-steeds. What ! when trumpets sound,

And banners flout the sky ! Name it no more ;
But hear me. Twelve brave horsemen of the guard
Will be your escort, with our trusty Kinsman.
Two dromedaries of the fleetest, girt
For thee and Hadad, if the day go hard,
Will bear ye from the danger.—Mark me, Prince ;
Keep well aloof ; come not too near the turmoil ;
Move with the battle ; make the wood your skreen.
If we speed well, I'll meet ye here ; if not,
Stint not your riding, heed not food nor rest
Till Talmai's palace shelter her.—Beware !
Nor swerve a tittle !—And I charge thee, Hadad,
Be not o'er curious to inspect the strife ;
Thou canst not aid it ; and the trust thou hast
Is more to me than victory.

Had. My lord,
I yield to strong necessity, or else,
Nothing should sever me from thee to-day.

Ab. We need thee not.—Farewell, my daughter. (*Kisses her.*) Go;

Make ready for the saddle.—Ride with me
Along the files, then, Hadad, to thy charge.

[*TAMAR receives her father's salute weeping, and retires. AB. and HAD. go out together.*]

SCENE III.

The forest of Ephraim: the tents of a company of Ishmaelites: women seen under the trees: ADAH singing by a tent door.

Ad. Greenly flourish, fragrant Mountain !
 Ishmael's free-born offspring know
 Every shade and gushing fountain,
 Where thy precious spices grow.

Laden with the odorous tribute,
When the gums have ceased to fall,
Perfumes for the Priestly censer,
Sweets for Memphis' regal hall,

First we greet, on Zion's summit,
 Haughty Judah's lion King,
 Then to Nile's expecting borders
 Gilead's rifled treasures bring.

What, though whirlwinds sweep our deserts,
 Sands and death-clouds stalk the air?
 Bloody treason never frights us,
 Royal mandates slay not there.

We no King, no Master worship ;
 Hagar's God alone on high :
 He the tameless spirit gave us,
 Spread the desert, hung the sky—

Ha ! Kedar, wherefore in such haste ?

Enter a young Ishmaelite.

Ked. O, Adah !

The plain is full of warriors : two great hosts
 Are rushing to the battle.

Ad. Heavens ! to battle !

Enter SARAH, from the tent.

Sar. What's that?

Ked. Sarah, two armies are in conflict;
Covering the plain with horses, arms, and ensigns.
Why, heard ye not the trumpets?

Women. (*collecting about them.*) No—No—No.

Sar. But where?

Ked. West of the wood. While at the spring
Filling our water-skins, we heard a blast,
And trampling hollow sounds that shook the earth,
And, pushing to the forest edge, we saw
Squadrons approaching 'gainst a mighty host
Camp'd in the plain, a countless multitude.
O, Adah, such a glorious sight! shields flashed,
Spears shook, and arrows flew!

Sar. But who are they?

Ked. We know not; but Abimilech declared
The battle promised blood. He says the spoil
Will more enrich us than our spices, more
Than thrice our annual journey into Gilead.

Dumah is with the camels ; all the rest
 Are watching to despoil the slain. I came,
 Lest ye should fear mischance.

Ad. Alas ! alas !

Ked. O, could you see how dazzling bright their arms,
 How square and firm they move, flashing the sun
 Back from the brazen ridges,—and behold
 The warrior in the car majestic rule
 His bounding steeds, white as the noon-day cloud !

*Enter TAMAR, pale, and leaning upon HADAD, followed by two
 of the Guard.*

Had. We crave your hospitality, good people ;
 This lady's faint, and cannot keep the saddle.
 Grant her the shelter of your tent awhile.

Sar. Enter in peace.

Ad. Sweet lady, let me aid thee.

[ADAH conducts TAMAR into the tent.]

Sar. Belike she's frightened ? Heard ye of the battle ?

Had. We have.

Sar. Know ye what hosts they be?

Had. 'Tis Israel.

Sar. Whom strive they with, my lord?

Had. Their ancient, cruel,
Invet'rate, and indomitable foe,
Each other.

Sar. Holy God!

Had. (*to the Guard.*) Keep all together. Are your
comrades near?

Guard. Stationed behind the tents, my lord.

Had. 'Tis well:
Be ready to mount instantly; and hark,
I have a word for all of ye.

[*HAD.* and *Guard* disappear behind the tents.]

Sar. Isaac with Isaac hosts, and Ishmael reaps
The bloody spoil! Thus Heaven's decrees—

Enter ADAH.

Ad. O, mother!
Never did I behold such beauty! sure,

She must be some born Princess, all her vest
 Is twined with gold, and every loop
 Is fastened with a gem. But Oh! such grief,
 Such sighs, it wrings my heart!

Women. Who can she be?

Ad. Her girdle, sandals, bracelets, glistering hood
 Of checklaton, are wondrous; and a cord
 Of rarest rubies twice engirds her neck,
 And falls betwixt her bosom white as wool.
 But O, her lovely face was never peer'd.
 She looks, methinks, as Pharaoh's daughter did,
 When we beheld her pleasuring on the Nile.

Sar. Here comes the stranger:—noble too.

Ad. Question him, mother dear:—ask who they are,
 And what hath chanced to them; 'tis, sure, some sad,
 Sad accident.

Enter HADAD.

Sar. How can we serve my lord,
 Or yon fair lady?

Had. Let us rest a space.

Sar. Yea, but she droops, my lord. I would we might
Administer : her tears and beauty touch
My daughter nearly.

Ad. Ah ! might not some comfort—

Had. Nothing : intrude not on her.

Sar. If we knew
Her ailment, doubt not we could balm it, sir :
Adah has soothed a wilder mood, believe me.

Had. Her friends are in the battle. Trouble not
Anxiety ye cannot tranquillize.

Sar. Her friends may conquer : Why doth she despair ?

Had. They may, they must. But leave her, dame.

Kedar. Here's Dumah.

Enter an Ishmaelite.

Sar. What of the battle, Dumah ? heard ye aught ?

Dum. I durst not leave the camels long ; but ere
I came, I ran and looked, just looked.

Had. What saw'st thou ?

Dum. Host mixed with host confused,
 The flash and shock of arms, shouts, groans, and peals
 Of shrilling trumpets, and a dreadful car
 Hurled by two steeds fiercer than unicorns—

Had. Who yielded ?

Dum. None ;
 But many fell.

Had. Know you—Would I could cast
 A glance there ! [TAMAR appears at the door of the tent.]
 —Ha ! what, my love ?

Tam. What tidings ?

Had. Nothing decisive. Thou shalt hear the first.
 Go in, sweet :—calm your agitated spirits.

Tam. Ah ! Hadad, thou mightst have prevented this.

Had. Nay, have I not assured thee how I strove,
 Entreated, kneeled to shake your father's purpose ?—
 His will is moveless as the world's fixed centre.

Tam. Had I but known it !—Now, it matters not
 Who wins or loses.

Had. Could I play the traitor ?
 Betray his secrets ?—That had sundered us

For ever, blasted all my hopes in thee.—

Go in, love ; thou shalt know whate'er betides.

[TAMAR retires.]

How long since you beheld the field ?

Dum. Why, sir,
I've laded, and led home the camels since.

Enter two Ishmaelites, with spoils.

Had. This looks of fresher die. Where got ye these ?

First Ish. From those who did not say us nay.

Had. Rings, daggers,
Girdles.—Or friends' or foes', they speak one tongue,
And bear the Hebrew image.—Take them hence—
Bring them not near this tent.—How goes the field ?

First Ish. The storm drives south.

Had. Ha ! south ?

Second Ish. We gathered these
Where the first blows were struck.

Had. Saw ye a chariot ?

First Ish. The conflict there, is like the desert whirlwind.

Darts, arrow-flights, and clashing eager spears,
And desperate combatants are huddled there.—
The dust-wreaths fly.—The ramping chargers foam
Like yesty waters : whizzing javelins glance
From their broad frontlets and brass poitrels, like
Hail from a rock. Their master's buckler takes
A tempest.

Had. So !—The battle pushes south ?

First Ish. We won
These spoils where it first closed, and now it rages
Further toward Succoth, all between thick strown
With carcasses. All's broken and confused.
But, scattered through the field, you may espy,
Far in the hostile ranks, the scarlet crests
Of some who know their weapons well, and clear
A bloody space around them.—Tema ! ha !

Enter third Ishmaelite, with booty.

How goes the strife ?

Third Ish. We left it at the direst.

First Ish. How fares the car?

Third Ish. The horses plunge and madden,
But cannot stir the wheels, fast wedged by dead
And living. Round them fights a furious ring,
Like reckless lions. All their silver manes,
And arch'd necks, when they rear, show bloody red.

Fourth Ish. (*entering while the last speaks.*)
They're prostrate—dead, I think—I saw them fall.

Had. What of their lord?

Fourth Ish. O'er his fallen steeds he combats:
His sword sweeps circles that the hardiest shun.

Had. He cannot 'scape then?—Can he 'scape?

Fourth Ish. For thrice
The car, I would not stand in it.

Third Ish. "Tis o'er ere this: we came about, for fear
Of skirmishers that struggled in the wood.

Had. (*walking aside.*)
'Tis odds he's slain—I know the grim-faced crew
That bay him—the Gibborim—dogs of blood,
The war-leviathans—I must bethink me.—
What's to be done?—I'll rid me of those fellows—

Alone with her, I may persuade :—If not—
 I have her—and can curb her—One thing's fixed :
 I part with her no more. My work is done.
 These feet ne'er tread Jerusalem again :—
 I've groaned, and burned, and suffered. Now's the meed.
 If our arch foe recover, is't my fault ?
 Have I not laboured ? hurled the brand of Hell
 Into his bosom ?—Come what may, I'll trust
 No after time with joys within my grasp.

Fourth Ish. Lo, lo, the Captain ; here's Abimilech.

Enter ABIMILECH, and several Ishmaelites, with a quantity of rich spoil.

Abim. (*perceiving Hadad.*) Whom have we here ?
Third Ish. We found him when we came,
 Inquiring of the battle.

Adah. (*running to Abimilech.*) Welcome, father.

Abim. What stranger's that ?

Ad. O, father, he hath brought
 The sweetest lady ever lifted lid.
 She's in our tent.

Had. (*saluting Abim.*) Peace.

Abim. Peace.

Had. I prithee, sir,

How fortunes now the field ?

Abim. The slaughter's rife.

Had. But is the battle lost ?

Abim. Flight, conflict, carnage

Cover the champaign and the southern wood ;

More north, loose bands, and straggling warriors stab,

And wrestle in the thickets, brakes, and marshes,

With direst hatred. Never saw I wrath

So fell, or followed.

Had. Heard ye of the Chief

Who fought from out a chariot with white steeds ?

Abim. He's finished.

Had. Ha ! how know'st thou that ?

Abim. I saw him lifeless.

Had. Art thou sure ?

Abim. If to be bored with three tough darts be sure.

Had. Beseech ye, come this way : some friends are near,
To whom the news were murderous.—Then he 'scaped not ?

Abim. He fled upon a mule, and disappeared,
And had escaped I thought, though hotly followed,
Taking the wood when met upon the plain.
But as I crossed the forest far within,
A trumpet roused me. Hearing earnest voices,
I made that way, through a close brake, to spy
The danger. Near the thicket's verge, I saw
A concourse round an oak. Intent they seemed
On some great spectacle. Opening anon,
I saw him, bleeding, and transpierced with darts,
Borne past me on their shields.

Had. What was his vesture ?

Abim. Fragments of purple hung about his shoulders.

Had. His arms ? his helm ?

Abim. Unhelm'd his head, and bare ;
His breastplate sparkled, studded, and engrailed
With flowers of gold, pure burnish of Damascus.

Had. His stature—

Abim. Palm-like tall, of noblest aspect ;
With ample locks that trailed upon the ground.

Had. Let Hades rise to meet him reverently,

For not a Kingly Shadow there sustained
A prouder spirit!

Abim. I have watched
His dauntless bearing through this desperate day
Too keenly to mistake. Though he miscarried,
He well deserves a valiant memory,
And fought it like a son of David.

Had. Dead!—

We must begone. Prithee, speak not of this
Till we're away.—First I'll despatch yon Horsemen.

[*Aside.*]

Abim. (*approaching the Ishmaelites.*)
Come, bustle bustle, mates :—day wastes—and with
The moon, we must be making for the Desert.

Had. (*behind the tents.*)
Mount, sirs,—your master needs ye—push amain—
Spur—strike into the field the shortest way—
Where'er ye see him grapple to his side—
I'll guard the Princess.—(*Returning.*) So ; we'll farther
pierce
The forest, that they trace us not. At worst,

Our dromedaries can, with ease, outstrip them.

[*Approaching SARAH's tent.*]

Princess, we must begone.

Tam. (appearing.) Ha!—What?

Had. But this ;—

Your father has retreated.

Tam. Is he safe?

Alive? uninjured?

Had. They who saw, report
He so escaped.

Tam. Thanks, gracious Heaven!

Had. Come, sweet,
We must obey him, now: The conflict's o'er;
Take comfort. Bid we these good friends farewell.

Tam. Adieu, kind-hearted Adah! Were my fate
Less cruel, we would not part so. Keep this
For Tamar's sake. (*Gives her a ring.*)

Adah. (weeping.) Farewell! farewell!—The stars
Prove kinder to you.

Sar. Go in peace.

Tam. Farewell to all!

[*The Ishmaelites follow TAM. and HAD. to the
rear of the encampment.*]

SCENE IV.

A sequestered place in the wood, surrounded with thick dark trees : a fountain, near a cave : Enter HADAD and TAMAR.

Tam. But why dismount here ?—night approaches,
Hadad :—

See, the slant sunbeams gild but the tall tree-tops,
And evening sables all below. The wood
Grows drear and dismal : let's escape from it.

Had. But we must wait the Guard.—Come, sit with me
Beside this mossy fountain : All is still here :—
List the sweet birds nestling among the boughs ;
All else soft silence : tumult comes not here.
Sit by this crystal spring awhile.

Tam. No, no,
I will not sit ; we must not linger here.

My father bade us haste : we disobey,
And risk his anger.—Keep your hands from me.

Had. But whither shall we fly ?

Tam. Where he commanded.

Had. To vassal Geshur !—Who can there protect us ?
Or in Damascus' tributary walls?—
Hear me, sweet Princess, bright star of my being,
Fly, fly with me beyond this wretched scene
Of civil strife, and never-ending discord,
To realms of quietness, where we may dwell
In lasting peace.

Tam. What mean'st thou ?

Had. Look on Israel

Deluged in blood—the Royal House divided—
The Tribes in faction—peace for ever fled !
What harbour here for love ? O, fly with me :
I will conduct you to a brighter sphere.

Tam. Forsake my country ?—father?—Never, never.

Had. Then Hadad's lost, and all our cherished hopes
A faithless dream.

Tam. These sad clouds may disperse.

Had. Thou know'st not—Ah!—I would have spared
that pang—

Tam. Ha!

Had. Hadad can never tread these bounds again,
Deemed (O, how falsely!) treason's foul abettor,
Since he is gone who only could attest
His spotless innocence.

Tam. Since who is gone?

Had. (*seeming to weep.*)

Alas! alas!—your father
Sleeps with the valiant of the years of old.

Tam. O, grief!—my father!—Couldst thou so deceive
me!

Had. I had not fortitude—

Tam. Alas! my father! (*Lost in tears.*)

Had. The bond is burst that knit thee to thy country:—
Thy father's murderers triumph:—Go not there
To see their mock'ry, hear his mighty name
Dishonoured by their lips. Let us retire,
And, piously, on some far peaceful shore,
With mingled tears embalm his memory.

Tam. Am I an orphan !

Had. Much loved Princess, no,

Not while this faithful heart so fondly—

Tam. All,

All gone !—all but one hoar and stricken head !—

My father David !—I'll to thee.

Had. (*aside.*) Curs'd thought !—

What ! to the slayer of thy parent ! Go

Where obloquy, and shame, and curses load him !

Hear him called, Rebel ! Canst thou bear that, lady ?

Tam. Nor shall I—David too will mourn, and shield
His memory with a father's love.

Had. Tamar—

Wilt thou forsake me ?

Tam. I must go to David.

Had. Think, think of your inevitable lot !

Withering neglect and scorn ! for who will wed

A traitor's offspring ? Men will call thee so,

And Princes slight thee as a blasted thing.

Tam. Prince, wherefore this to me ? Conduct me hence.

Had. (abruptly, in an altered tone.)

Nay, hold ! for you must listen. And, if deaf
To love, I can speak that will touch your ear
To fearful ecstasy.

[*TAMAR startled : he proceeds in an agitated manner.*]

—Confide in me,
And turn thy back on this curs'd land for ever,
And I'll convey thee to a Paradise
Where thou shalt reign the worshipped Queen of realms,
To which this Canaan is a darksome span.
Beings shall serve thee brighter than thy dreams :
The Elements shall stoop to thee ; the Sea
Disclose her wonders, and receive thy feet
Into her pearly chambers ; radiant clouds
Shall be thy chariot, thou shalt roam the skies :—
To satisfy thy noble thirst of knowledge,
Ages, forgotten ages shall cast up
Their hoarded treasures, ere the mighty flood
Covered the mountains, ere this rolling Earth
Stood in her station :—Thou shalt know the Stars,
The Houses of Eternity, their names,
Their courses, destiny ;—all secrets high.

Tam. Talk not so madly, Hadad.

Had. (*vehemently.*) Speak——answer——

Wilt thou be mine if mistress of them all ?

Tam. I know not what I fear when I say, No.

Thou wouldest not wrong me in this lonely wood,

Confided to thee as a sacred trust——

Alas ! and yet thy passion-troubled mien

Appals me.

Had. (*haughtily.*) Ha ? perhaps you doubt my power ?

Whom dost thou think me ?

Tam. Able to achieve

What human strength and genius——

Had. (*with scorn.*) Human strength !

Tam. What horrid thought of pride curls thy pale lip,

And ruffles all thy form ?——O, look not thus——

Your eyes are terrible—Protect me, Heaven !—

How, how have I offended ?

Had. Still, thou deem'st me

Hadad—the man—the worm—the 'heritor

Of a poor vanquished tributary King !—

Then know me—

Tam. (*terrified.*) Heavens! O, heavens!

Had. This form was Hadad's—

But I—the Spirit—I—the Power who speak
Through these clay lips—am from the Heaven of Heavens,
The peer of Angels.

Tam. Horror!

Had. Canst thou conceive
The love that could persuade me to these fetters?—
Quenching immortal and angelic lustre—
Abandoning my power—I who could touch
The firmament, and plunge to darkest Sheol,
Bask in the sun's orb, fathom the green sea,
Even while I speak it,—here to root and grow
In Jewish earth,—a mortal abject thing,
To win and to enjoy thy love!

Tam. (*in a low voice of supplication.*) Heaven, Heaven,
Forsake me not!

Had. First, in the city's crowded gate I saw thee,
The memorable day thou cam'st from Geshur,
A vermil blossom by thy father's side,
Hailing Jerusalem with smiles and tears.

Then, then I loved thee—tender as thou wert—
I hung invisibly about thy steps—
About thy bed—I glided in thy dreams ;
Filled them with sweet voluptuous forms and phantoms,
And watched thy glowing cheek, and heaving bosom,
While my bright visions stirred thy fancy. Happy,
Till that curst Syrian, fresher than Adonis,
Became thy inmate. Oh ! what horrid pangs
Rent me when I perceived thy conscious cheek,
Thy soul-fraught glances ! No seducing dream,
Illusion, art of mine, could reach thee more.—
Then first I knew Hell's agonies, and writhed
In fire, and felt the scorpion's sting.

Tam. (*aside.*) What thoughts !—
Am I awake ?—What horrid recollections !—
Had. And yet I harmed him not—I harmed him not—
But mourning in a mountain solitude
Neighb'ring Jerusalem, my luckless love
And blasted destiny, your father's train
Came forth to hunt. The Syrian, from the rest
Severing in hot pursuit, fell in with Outlaws,

Who followed, and with bloody daggers slew him,
Even by the fountain where I mused unseen.

Tam. (*clasping her forehead.*)

O, grace! O, pity!—Sure my senses reel!

Had. Thou know'st the time—remember'st well. 'Twas
night

Ere he returned—ere I returned—for I,
From that day forth, have worn these lineaments.

Tam. Confusion!—horror!

Had. While his lifeless limbs
Pressed the green sod, while, pitying, I surveyed
His matchless beauty, nobly stern in death,
And thought how dear those features were to thee,
I dared the penalty,—for thy sake, dared
Death, prison-house, and penal consequence,
Denounced on the offence—I linked myself
To Hadad's form, and man's infirmities—
My recompense, my only recompense,
Thy love.

Tam. Insidious Fiend!—'tis falsehood all!—
Thou slew'st him!

Had. Ha!—are there not other means
To free the spirit?—Had I marred him thus?

[*Draws aside his vesture, and displays two bleeding
stabs upon his breast.*]

Tam. O, Powers of Heaven!

Had. Immedicable wounds that thrill and throb
Hourly, as with the mortal steel, and gush
Fresh blood, when stronger passions shake my frame;
No art can heal them and no balm assuage.—
O, if this sight constrain the tear of pity,
How wouldst thou live to listen the dire torments
Must loose me from this flesh—too deep to tell—
To which your death, by poison, steel, or rack,
Is a sweet noontide slumber.

Tam. Wretched Being!

Had. Dost thou not pity me?

Tam. If't be not guilt;
For thou art ruined, and I know thy mind
Vast, various, capable of misery
Past thought.

Had. I love thee:—'tis my only joy:—

I've paid to win thy love a sumless price :—

Canst thou deny it me? (*Approaching her.*)

Tam. Avoid me—leave me—

I sin in talking with thee—Pardon, Heaven!

I know not what I do.

Had. Weep not,

Nor fear, sweet Princess : I would make thee happy,

Happier than mortal. Bid me sprinkle, now,

'Three crystal drops of this pure spring upon thee,

And thou shalt live, unfading, tracts of years,

And bloom, when all who stand to-day on earth

Are shapeless dust. (*Scoops water from the fountain.*)

Tam. (*recoiling with horror.*)

Avaunt!—approach me not!—

Jehovah shelter me!—O, righteous Prophet,

Had I obeyed thee!—Guilty, and undone!

Had. Why call'st thou on that name so oft, nor know'st
Thyself abandoned? Hop'st thou to escape
His wrath who visits on the children's head
The father's guilt? Thy sire has angered him,
And thou must suffer.—Take the good I offer:

Thou hazardest no evil, and securest
Almost immortal bliss.—Wilt thou ?

Tam. No—no—no.

Had. Strange obduracy ! Thou art mine, thou seest ;
Resigned to me in this vast wilderness,
Night, solitude, and silence all around,
With none to friend or help thee ; yet thou turnest
From happiness beyond the lot of mortal,
Beauty unfading, knowledge like the Angels',
Glory, and sovereignty, and length of days,
And raptures needing more expressive lips—
Ah ! thou relent'st—Thus, let me clasp my treasure !

Tam. (*springing backward.*)

Heart, hold thou firm ! God, look on me,
For I am sore beset !—If 'tis my crime
Not to have abhorred thee utterly, and sealed
My ears like adamant, nor ventured, once,
Exchange a thought,—'twas difficult, alas !
Seeing that form, and listening to a tongue
Employed so oft in noblest eloquence,
To realize thee, foul, and reprobate,

Abandoned quite, hating thy God, and bent
To drag a frail, bereaved, unhappy creature
Down to thy own dark mansion-house of pain.
But now, I know thee—I abjure thee—hate thee
More than unwittingly I loved. To God
I cleave—on God I call—

Had. (with demoniac violence.)

No more—we'll argue after—Thou, at least,
Shalt never bear the Incarnate Foe we fear!

Tam. Save me!—Oh! Oh!—For Jacob's, David's sake!

[*He drags her, shrieking, into the cavern. A trumpet and voices heard in the wood. Enter BENAIAH, with a party of Cherethites, from the pursuit.*]

Ben. This way, this way—It issues from yon cave.

Cherethites. Stand from the gorge—Give light, and weapon-room.

[*Several Cherethites enter the cavern.*]

*Ben. It thrilled me like a woman's desperate cry—
Ha! hark!—what dire unnatural yell was that?*

[*They listen.*]

Some mortal conflict rages—Heavenly Powers!
What curses! howling! horrid blasphemy!

First Cher. 'Tis like Gehenna !

Ben. Guard the entrance :—

Some stout hearts follow me.

[*BENAIAH enters, attended by three of the band.*]

Second Cher. Follow, who list :

I like not these dark caves that yawn like Hades ;

They're haunted by accursed Spirits oft,

Who craftily entice men in, and there,

Force them to kneel at their ensnaring altars.

First Cher. But should we leave our lord in peril ?

Third Cher. No,

By heaven ! Let's in, and stand by him.

[*As others are entering, a Cherethite rushes out, pale
and trembling.*]

Cherethites. What now ?—

What violence is doing ?—Speak.—Why stares

Your hair ?

Cherethite. O, go not—'tis too terrible.

Other Cherethites. What saw ye ?—Speak !

Cherethite. One like the Cherubim,

Dreadfully glistering, wing'd, and dazzling bright

As lightning, whose fierce-bickering eyeballs shot
Sparkles like arrows, filling all the cave
With red effulgence,—smiting with grasp'd beams
A howling, withering, ghast, demoniac shape,
Crouched like a venomous reptile,—rage and fear
Gleaming in his fell eyes,—who cursed, and gnash'd,
And yelled, till death's last livid agony.

Second Cher. The Prophets keep us !

Cherethite. Nothing kin to earth
E'er looked such serpent rage, or battled so
With death's strong pangs.

Third Cher. Heaven guard us from the Fiend !

[*They all start.*]

Fourth Cher. What sound was that ?

Second Cher. It seemed a rush of wind from out the cave.

First Cher. 'Twas passing wings.

Third Cher. I felt it ; and methinks,
A sudden sweetness fills the air around us.

First Cher. Ambrosial. It betokens some blest Presence.

Second Cher. They come, they come.

[*Enter two Cherethites, dragging the body of HADAD
from the cavern. All gather round it.*]

First Cher. What hideous monster is't?

Second Cher. 'Tis nothing human:

Look how 'tis blasted.

Third Cher. What a hellish glare
Is glazed upon those starting eyeballs!

Second Cher. Damned.

[Enter BENAIAH, and others, from the cavern, bearing
TAMAR, whom they place upon the turf by the spring.]

Ben. 'Tis she indeed, the Princess, but not dead;
The colour's in her cheek, and see, she breathes.

[Sprinkles water in her face.]

Tam. (opening her eyes, terrified.)

Where am I?—ha!—

Ben. Look up, sweet lady: Be not so affrighted:—
We are thy friends, the servants of the King
Thy Grandsire.

Tam. Who?

Ben. I am Benaiah; these
Are David's servants.

Tam. Take me to him—Save me—Oh!—(sinks back.)

Ben. Take courage, Princess:—all is well:—Behold!

Arm'd friends are round thee. Heaven hath shown us, too,
Who guards the innocent.—Sound the recall:
Collect more strength about us: Seize a mule,
If any brouse the glade without a rider.

[*Trumpet sounds.*]

Hell has been busy. Yonder withered thing
Is Hadad. Though close shrouded from men's eyes,
He could not 'scape the All-seeing, who hath hurled
Ripe vengeance on the foul deceiver's head.

I well remember, now, a dark surmise
Imparted by the Prophet to the King,
The day we left Jerusalem.—But, sirs,
The night grows chill. We must remove her:—Come.—
My lord will prize her safety as the kingdom.

[*Exeunt, bearing TAMAR.*]

THE END.



NOTES.

NOTE I.

—or forged

*(More like) by dark Ahithophel, to rouse
The Prince.—p. 53.*

Ahithophel appears to have been the grandfather of Bathsheba. His enmity to David is imputed by the Jews to resentment on her account.

NOTE II.

*Above, about, beneath ; earth, sea, and air ;
Their habitations various as their minds,
Employments, and desires.—p. 74.*

“The fall of Angels, therefore, was pride. Since their fall, their practices have been the clean contrary unto those before mentioned ; for being dispersed, some in the air, some in the earth, some amongst the minerals, dens, and caves that are under the earth, they have by all means laboured to effect an universal rebellion against the laws, and as far as in them lieth, utter destruction of the works of God.”

HOOKE, Eccles. Polity. b. 1. sec. 4.

NOTE III.

*—but in the chambers of this rock
Are treasures which the empires of the earth,
United, cannot equal.—p. 82.*

Josephus, speaking of the burial of David, observes: “He had great and immense wealth buried with him, the vastness of which may be easily conjectured at by what I shall now say; for a thousand and three hundred years afterwards, Hyrcanus the High Priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus that was called the Pious, the son of Demetrius, and was desirous of giving him money to get him to raise the siege, and draw off his army; and having no other method of compassing the money, opened one room of David’s sepulchre, and took out three thousand talents, and gave part of that sum to Antiochus, and by this means caused the siege to be raised, as we have informed the reader elsewhere. Nay, after him, and that many years, Herod the King opened another room, and took away a great deal of money; and yet neither of them came at the coffins of the Kings themselves.”—*Antiq. of the Jews, b. 7. ch. 15.*

The riches left by David, according to the common computation, exceeded eight hundred millions sterling.

NOTE IV.

Where goes Mephibosheth at this dusk hour?—p. 94.

That David strongly suspected Mephibosheth of some participation in the rebellion, is apparent from his behaviour to Ziba. When Mephibosheth meets the King, on his return to Jerusalem, with externa

signs of the deepest sorrow for his misfortunes, and protests that the accusations of his servant are false and slanderous ; David, instead of indignantly annulling his gift to Ziba of Mephibosheth's possessions, and inflicting the punishment he would have merited, had his master's story been believed, answers : " Why speakest thou any more of thy matters ? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land."—See also JOSEPHUS : Translator's note. b. 8. ch. 11.

NOTE V.

*—Thou know'st 'tis held by righteous men
That Heaven intrusts us all to Watching Spirits.*—p. 118.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in Heaven.—MATT. xviii. 10. Are they not all ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them who should be heirs of salvation.—HEBREWS, i. 14. The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.—PSALM xxxiv. 7.

The Jews universally believed in Guardian Angels.

NOTE VI.

—Fiends walk the earth.—p. 119.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.—JOB, i. 7.

NOTES.**NOTE VII.**

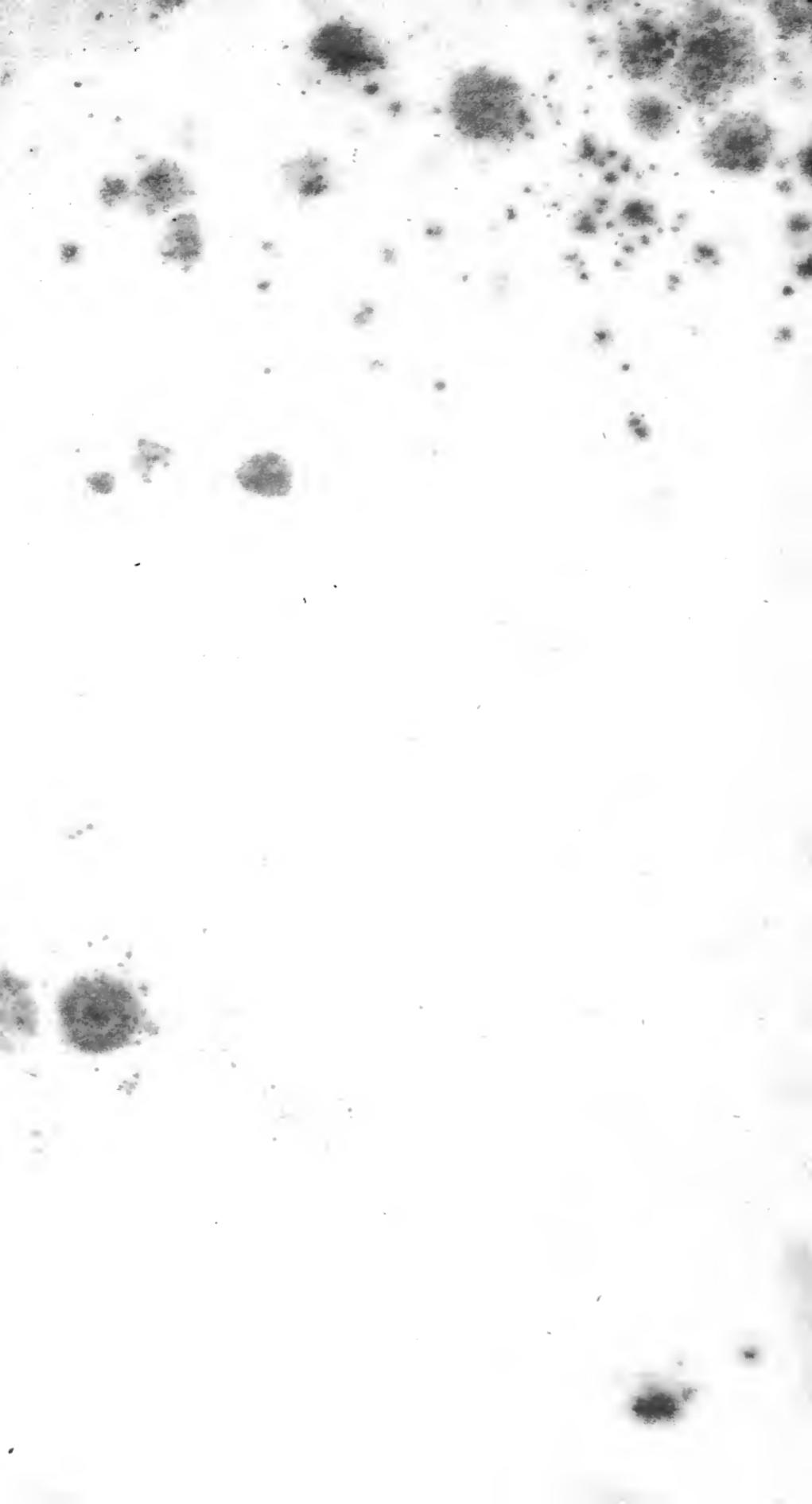
And left that Son of Wickedness to triumph.—p. 155.

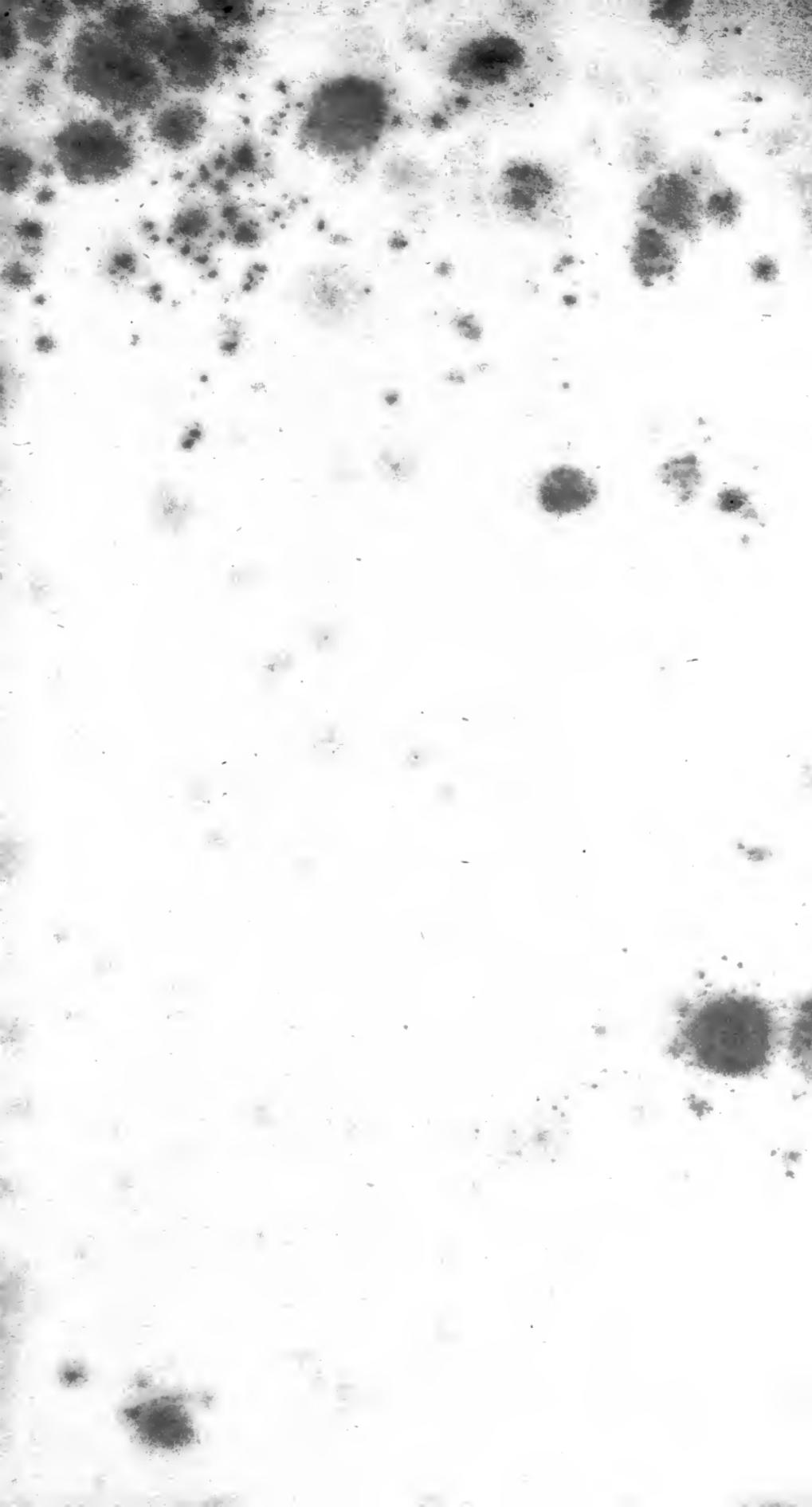
The 89th Psalm, alluded to by Nathan, is ascribed by the Jews to Abraham.

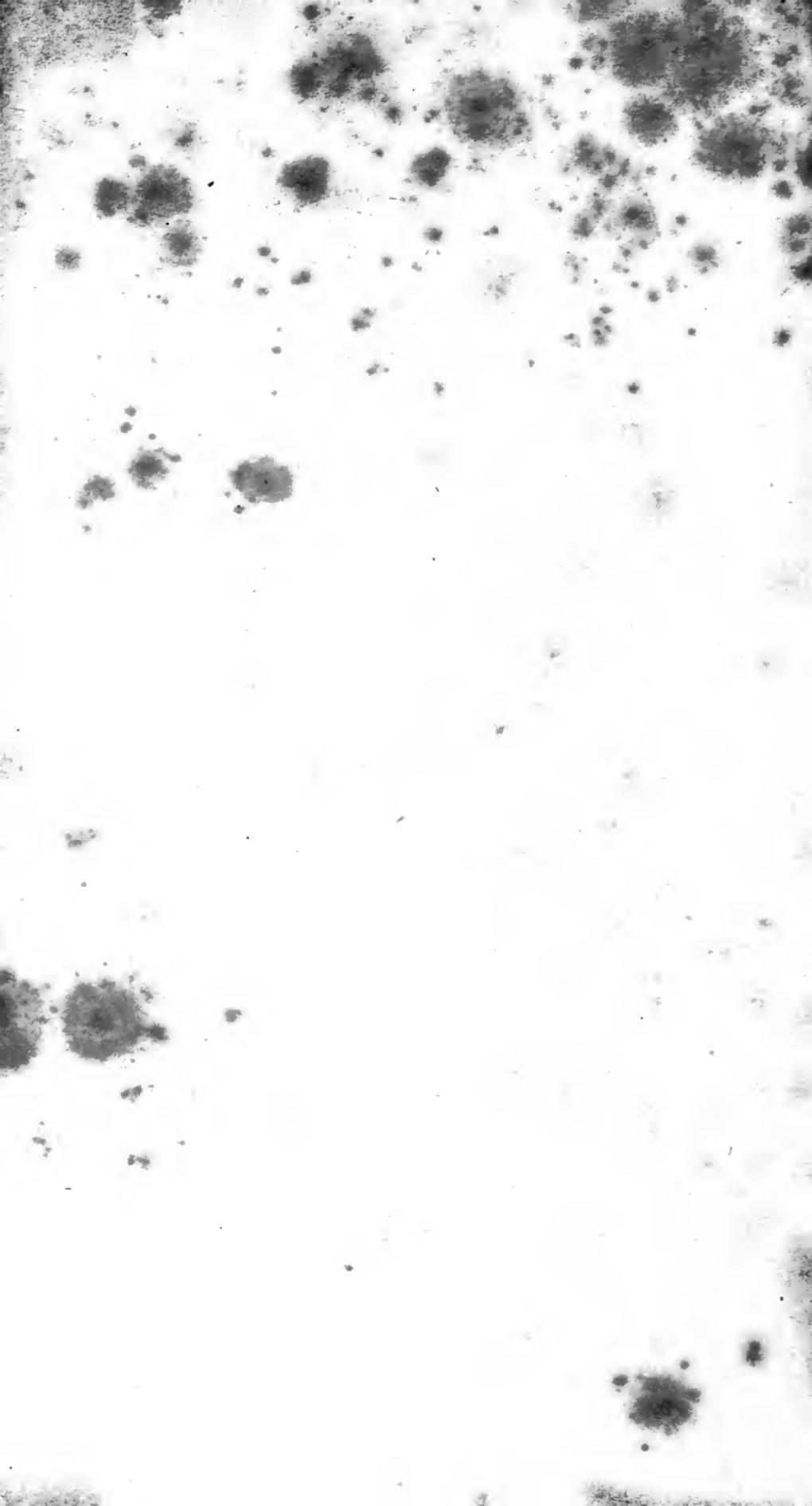
NOTE VIII.

Hard by the Wood of Ephraim.—p. 159.

The Wood of Ephraim was near the city of Mahanaim in the country of Gilead, in the tribe of Gad. It received this appellation from a slaughter of the Ephraimites by Jephtha, which happened there.







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